

OFFICIAL 2009 FOOTBALL YEARBOOK

THE ORIGINAL MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO NEBRASKA ATHLETICS

HUSKERS

ILLUSTR

500
ISSUES

NDAMUKONG SUH

BIG MAN

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

HUSKER POWER
45 LB

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64 HUSKER BIOS

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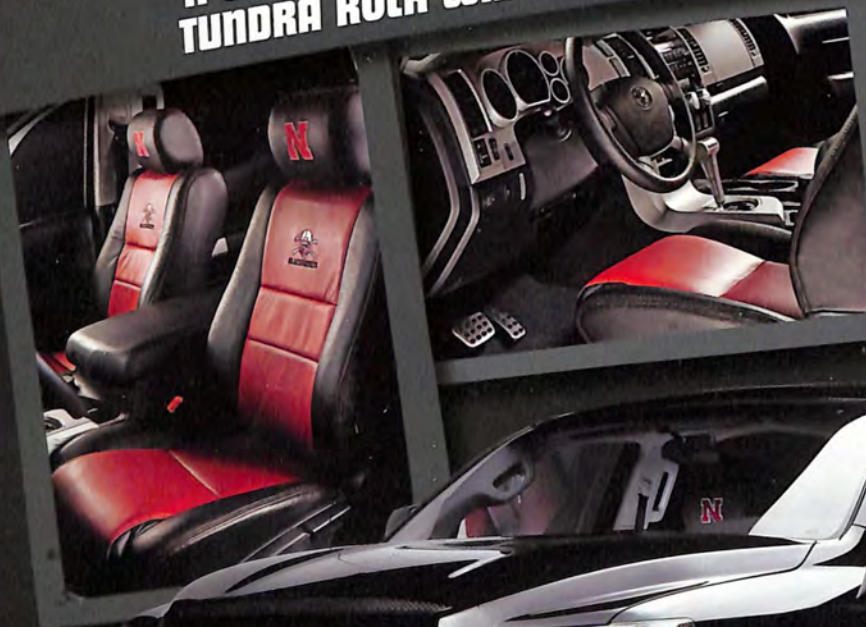
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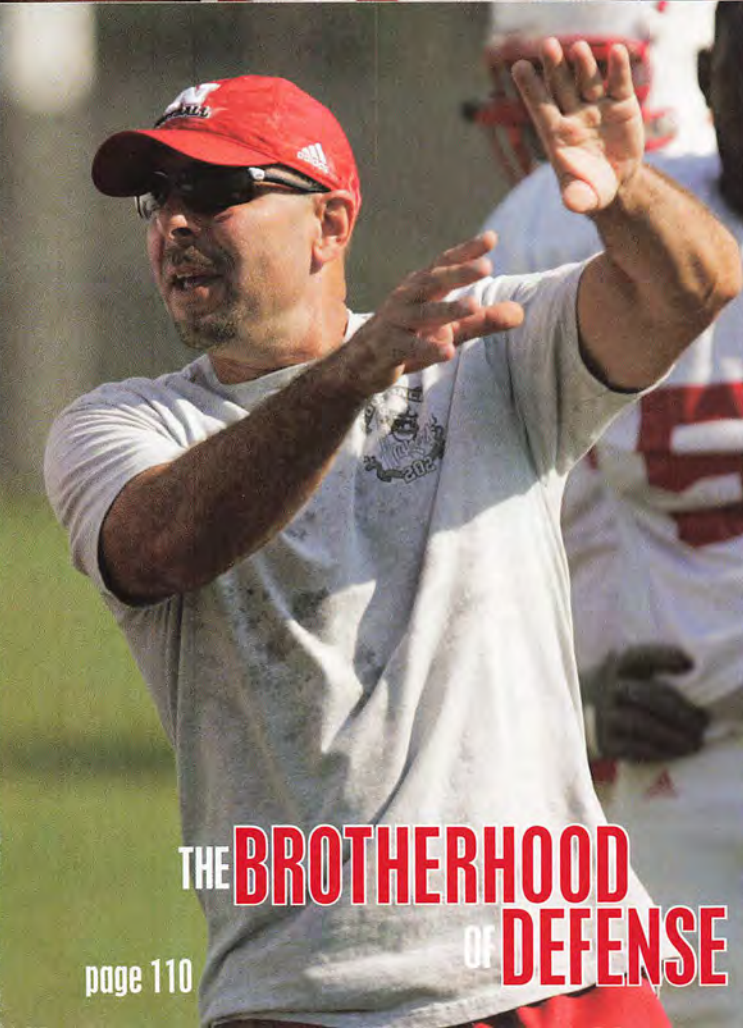
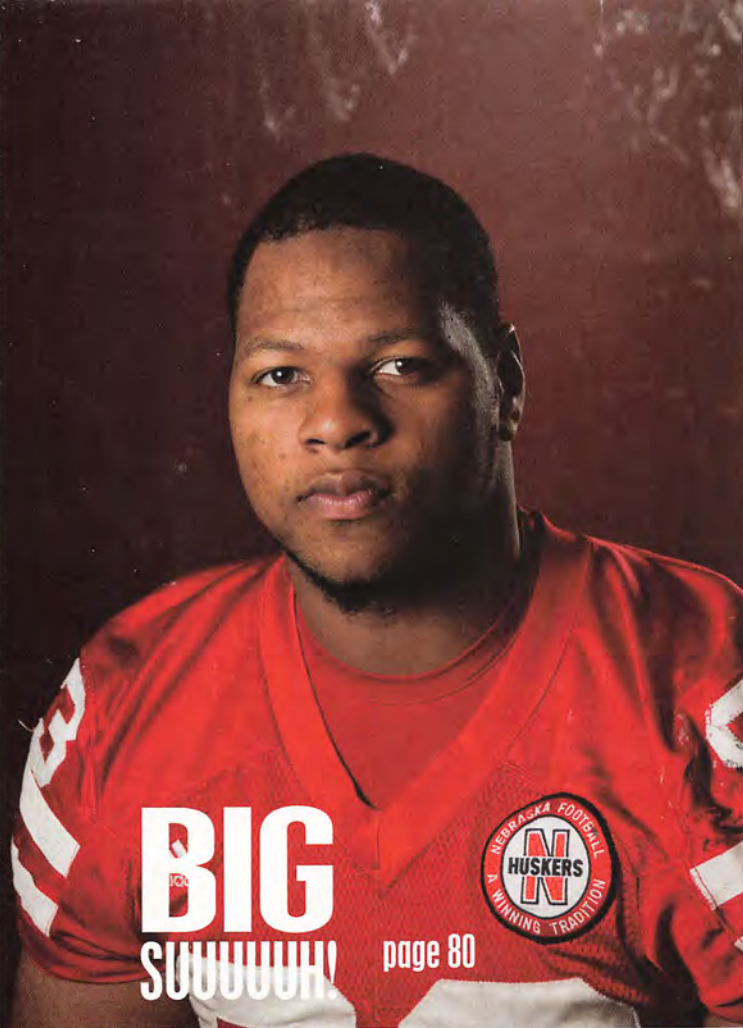
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HUSKERS

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JUNE/JULY 2009 • VOLUME 29 • NO. 6

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HUSKERS

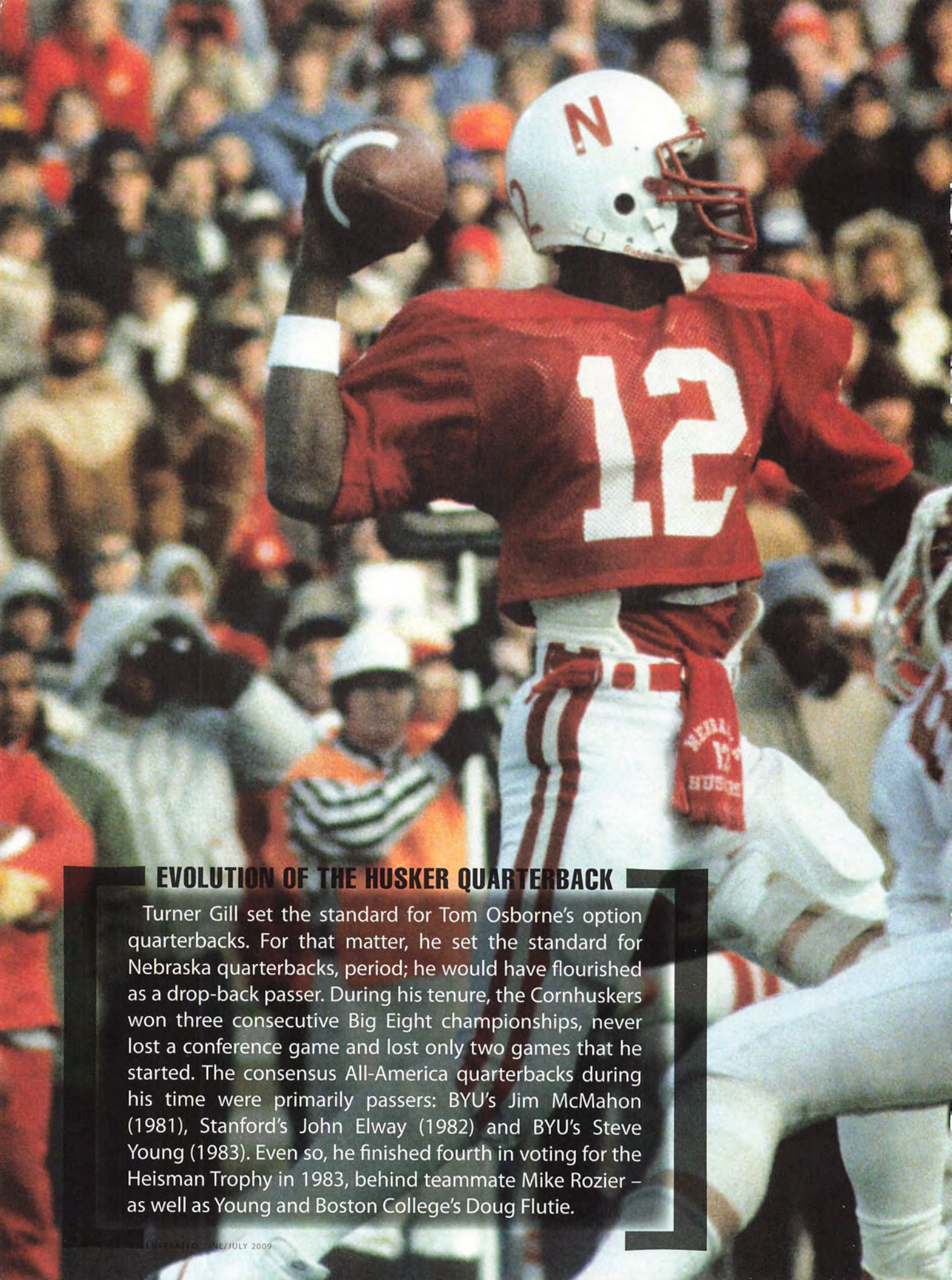
ILLUSTRATED

ON THE COVER

Ndamukong Suh is already projected as a top draft pick for the 2010 NFL Draft. Nebraska's chances for a Big 12 Championship will weight heavily on Suh's ability to lead the Husker defense.

Photo by Randy Hampton

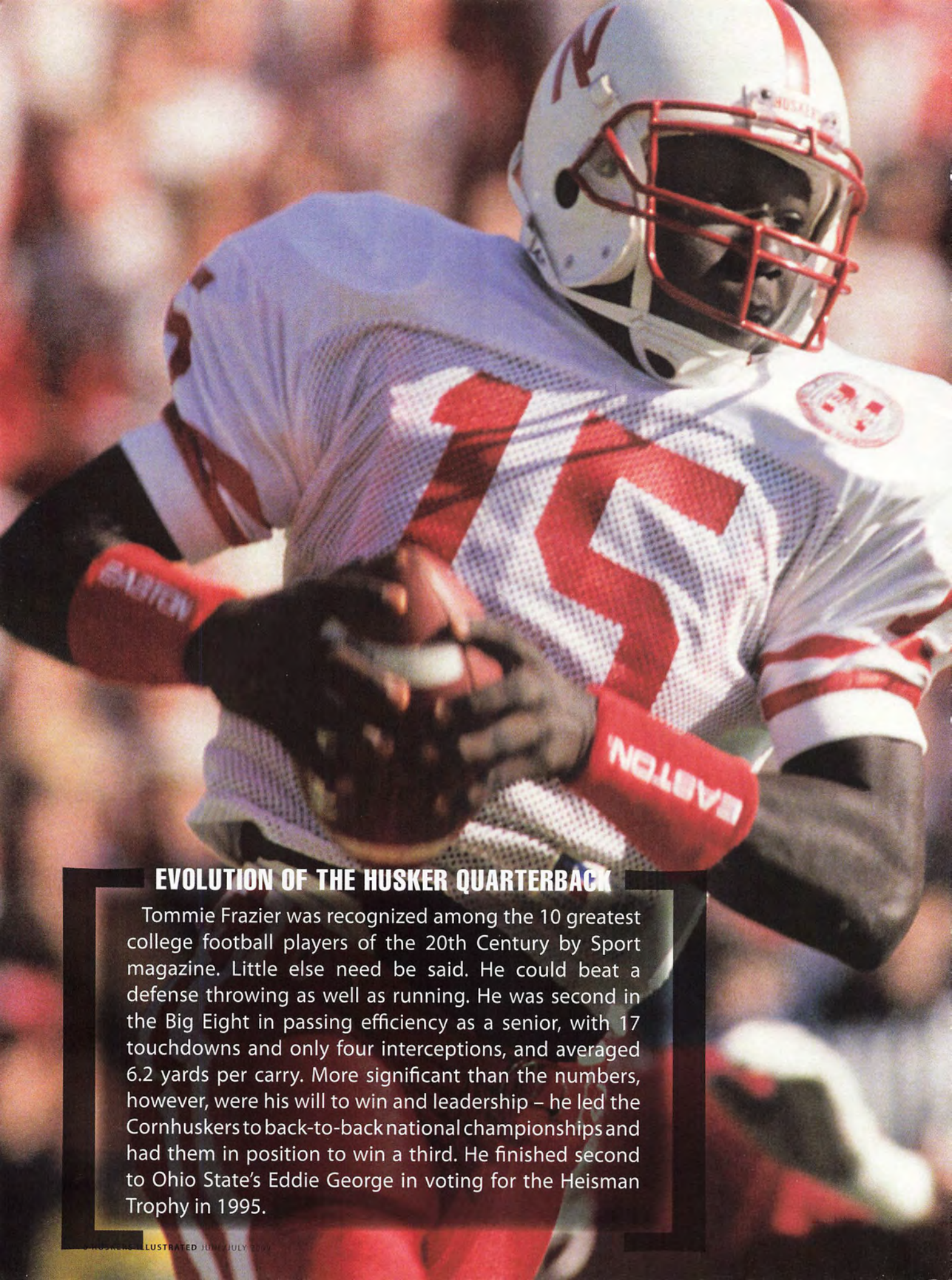




EVOLUTION OF THE HUSKER QUARTERBACK

Turner Gill set the standard for Tom Osborne's option quarterbacks. For that matter, he set the standard for Nebraska quarterbacks, period; he would have flourished as a drop-back passer. During his tenure, the Cornhuskers won three consecutive Big Eight championships, never lost a conference game and lost only two games that he started. The consensus All-America quarterbacks during his time were primarily passers: BYU's Jim McMahon (1981), Stanford's John Elway (1982) and BYU's Steve Young (1983). Even so, he finished fourth in voting for the Heisman Trophy in 1983, behind teammate Mike Rozier – as well as Young and Boston College's Doug Flutie.

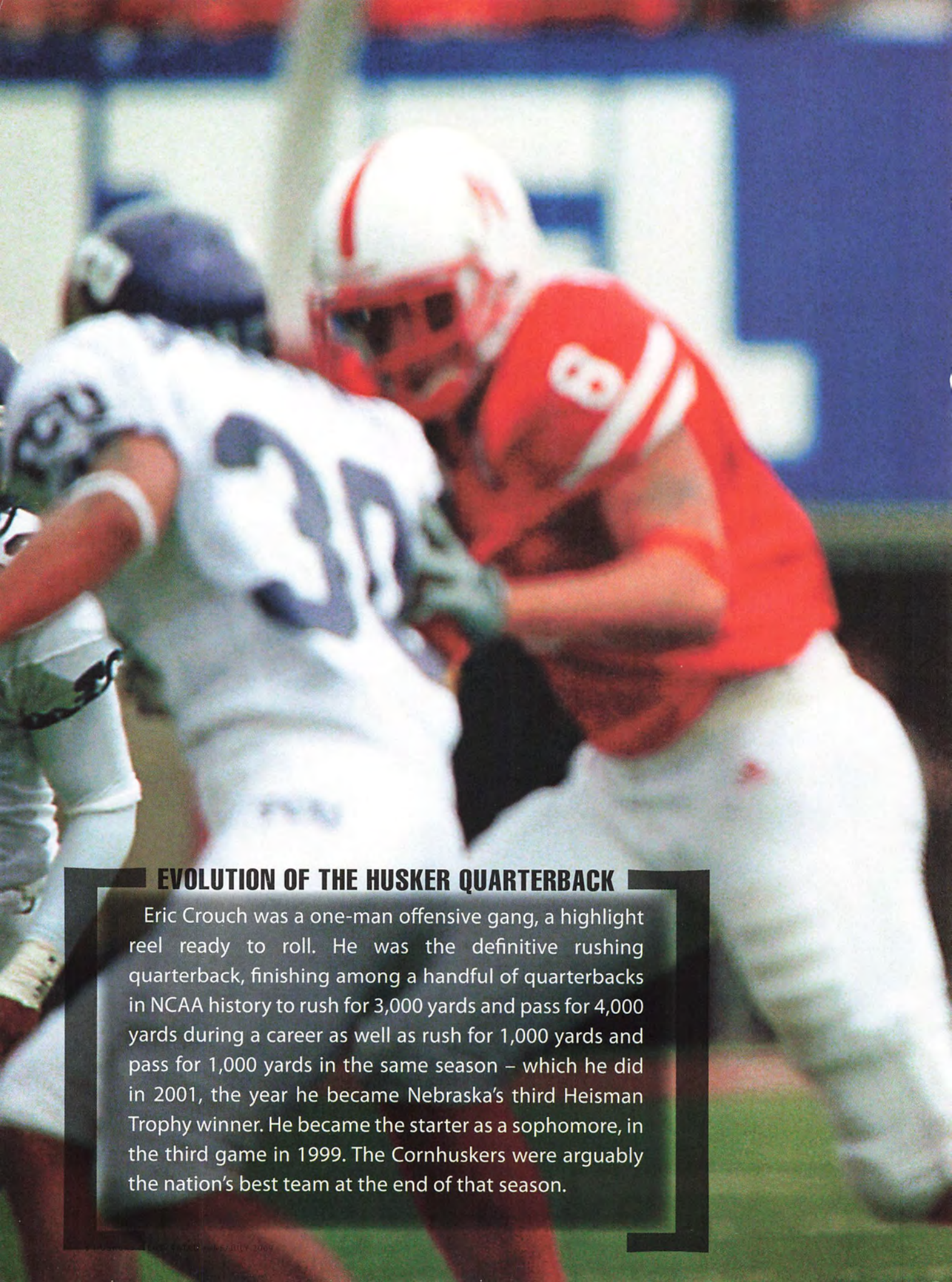




EVOLUTION OF THE HUSKER QUARTERBACK

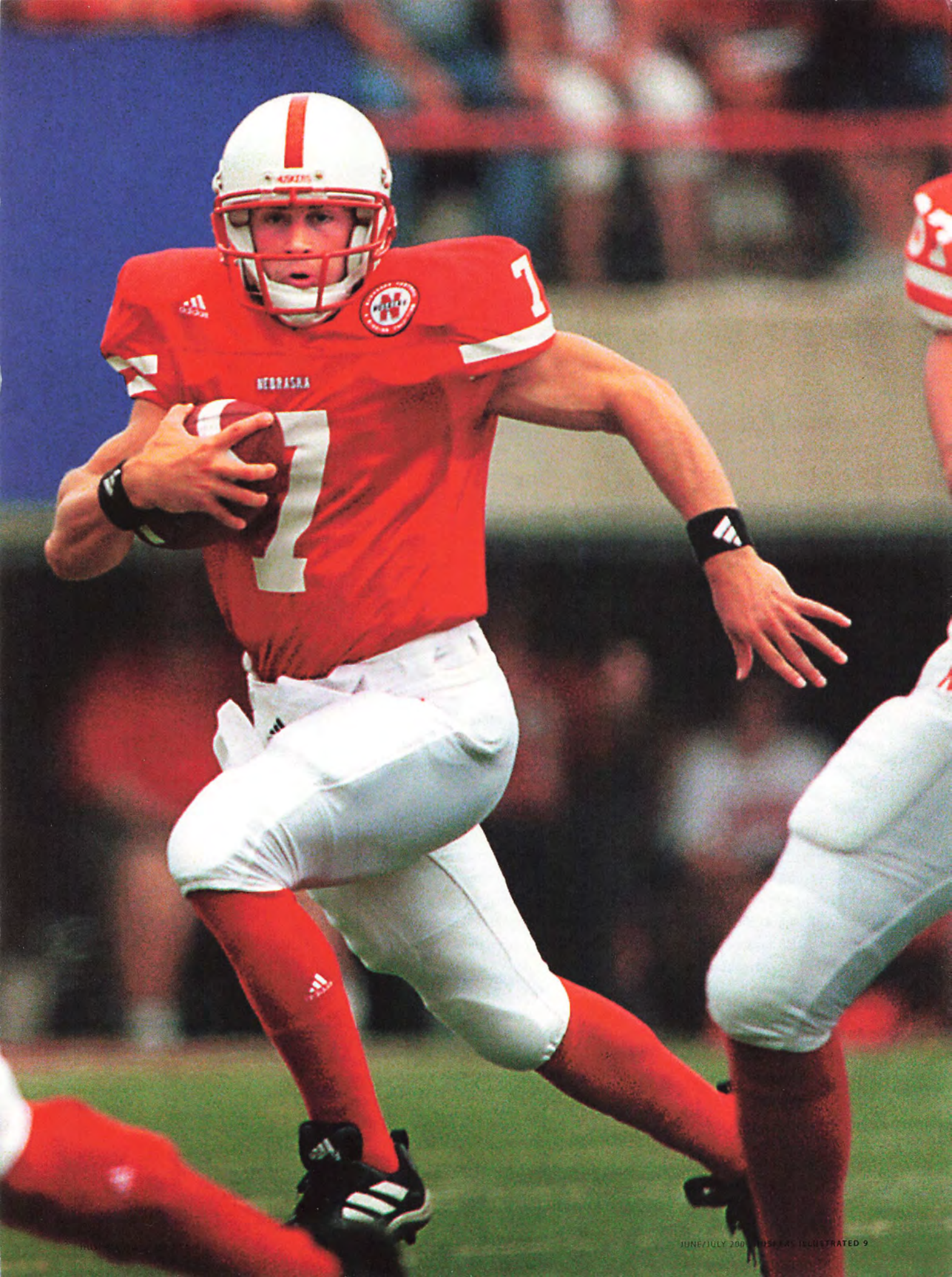
Tommie Frazier was recognized among the 10 greatest college football players of the 20th Century by Sport magazine. Little else need be said. He could beat a defense throwing as well as running. He was second in the Big Eight in passing efficiency as a senior, with 17 touchdowns and only four interceptions, and averaged 6.2 yards per carry. More significant than the numbers, however, were his will to win and leadership – he led the Cornhuskers to back-to-back national championships and had them in position to win a third. He finished second to Ohio State's Eddie George in voting for the Heisman Trophy in 1995.





EVOLUTION OF THE HUSKER QUARTERBACK

Eric Crouch was a one-man offensive gang, a highlight reel ready to roll. He was the definitive rushing quarterback, finishing among a handful of quarterbacks in NCAA history to rush for 3,000 yards and pass for 4,000 yards during a career as well as rush for 1,000 yards and pass for 1,000 yards in the same season – which he did in 2001, the year he became Nebraska's third Heisman Trophy winner. He became the starter as a sophomore, in the third game in 1999. The Cornhuskers were arguably the nation's best team at the end of that season.



PREDICTIONS OF EXCELLENCE

2009 season brings great expectations and our 500th issue



SUMMERS IN NEBRASKA are ripe with football predictions. And by early indications, 2009 will be no different.

Not to be left out, our 2009 Football Yearbook is full of predictions – from our writers, the media and our readers, some of whom offered doozies.

They range from the discouraged to the hopeful, the cautious to the radical.

Within this wide range of predictions is an overwhelming expectation that the Huskers are headed for greatness in 2009. In fact, of the 853 readers responding to our HuskersIllustrated.com fan poll (see page 12), 82 percent (700) predicted at least nine regular-season victories. And 30 percent (259) predicted at least 10 wins, which would all but guarantee a Big 12 North title.

NFL draft experts are picking senior defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh as a potential first-round draft pick – some are saying as high as the No. 2 overall pick. Combine such forecasts and you can see the origin of our cover headline: “Big Man, Great Expectations.”

While we may not be booking trips to a national title game, Huskers Illustrated expects a solid season as well, as you will see in these pages.

In addition to our annual season preview, this issue – Volume 29, Issue 6 – is a special one for us at the magazine. It marks the 500th in our 29-year history, a testament to the excellent editors, writers

and photographers that have preceded me.

As the current caretaker of this publication, I wanted to relive the excellent work you’ve come to expect over the years. We celebrated our history in these pages by showcasing our 140 greatest covers, our seven biggest stories and even our favorite HuskerNutz cartoons. As you will see, these pebbles from our history reflect milestone moments in Nebraska’s athletic program.

That Huskers Illustrated has flourished during a time that has taken its toll on others in the industry is no coincidence. Our success today is a by-product of the sweat poured into this publication over the past three decades, beginning in August of 1981.

It is a testament to the loyalty of Husker fans, who persevere and keep the faith, even when predictions don’t pan out.

We are excited for what the next 500 issues of Huskers Illustrated hold. Will there be another national title to celebrate? Another three?

We hope you enjoy this trip down memory lane and our predictions for the 2009 season. Because it turns out the best prediction in our 29 years came from our first publisher, Mike Henry, who wrote in the inaugural issue of Huskers Illustrated, “So get to know us. We plan on being around a long, long time.” **N**

Send me your comments or story ideas to aaron@huskersillustrated.com.

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“WALK-ONS ARE

an important part of our Nebraska football tradition, and they will continue to be.”

TOM OSBORNE

WALK-ON TRADITION

Over his 25-year tenure as Nebraska’s head coach, **TOM OSBORNE** estimates that approximately 40 percent of the Huskers’ restricted travel rosters were represented by walk-ons.

“We always held back a number of scholarships to award to walk-ons as they moved up the depth chart and became starters or valuable backups,” he said. “Walk-ons are an important part of our Nebraska football tradition, and they will continue to be.”



The Nebraska Walk-On Club, as presented by the Extra Point Club is the newest way to support this proud Nebraska tradition. By becoming a member, you will receive early invitations to Walk-On Club Luncheons, an exclusive invitation to a spring practice event and monthly e-newsletters in season with exclusive features about current and former walk-ons.

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Big Red Mailbag

SEND US YOUR LETTERS!! Huskers Illustrated loves to hear from its readers. Have an opinion to share about a story in this issue? Send us a letter. Have an opinion about the Huskers? Drop us a line. Want to share a photo from your last Husker game? We'll take it. **IF WE PRINT YOUR LETTER, WE'LL SEND YOU A SPECIAL HUSKER GIFT!** Send digital photos and letters to huskersillustrated@gmail.com and your regular snapshots and letters to HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED, 7755 S. 23rd St., Lincoln, NE 68512. Letters may be edited for length and grammar.



FAN PREDICTIONS

Nebraska goes 9-3 with losses to Virginia Tech, Texas Tech, and Oklahoma. Nebraska plays in Big 12 Championship vs. Texas. I think we lose this one and head to the Cotton and finish 10-4. I would still consider this progress and would be tremendously happy. Winning the Big 12 North and being competitive in the big 12 championship will do wonders for our recruiting.

If recruits had any doubts before this season, the answer is clear - we are back!

DANTHEMAN83

I think we beat Texas Tech, but I'm not so sure about KU or CU. KU has Reesing and CU had all those injuries on the o-line last year which provided a ton of experience for this year. All in all, so much depends on how we develop on offense. If we start to resemble teams of old it could go relatively easy. If we sputter, it could be tough to be Big 12 North champions in a conference where offense is king.

MAJOR_JOHN

I voted for 9 wins. I think the toughest teams will be Virginia Tech and Oklahoma. We will also drop one

between Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado. I think we handle Texas Tech at home pretty easily.

Chances to win: Oklahoma - 10%, Virginia Tech - 30%, Kansas - 65%, Missouri - 70%, Colorado - 75%, Texas Tech - 75%. The rest of the games should be wins...

or else that means we got outcoached because they don't have our talent. Keep up the great work, I look forward to receiving every issue.

BLACKSHIRTJB

The Huskers finish 10-2, with losses to Virginia Tech and Oklahoma. Nebraska could easily finish 9-3 if

they slip up against Kansas, Missouri, Texas Tech, or Colorado. All of which are road games, except Texas Tech. However, none of those fellow Big 12 teams will be ranked higher or have a better record going into their games with Nebraska.

UNL'SKERS5

NU will be 8-0 when they step on the field to play OU.

STHPLATEAU

The Huskers are back! They win 11 games in the regular season with the only loss coming to Virginia Tech. The reason why? The offense will struggle early on with

HUSKERSILLUSTRATED.COM FAN POLL

How many *regular season* games do you think the Huskers will win in 2009?



10 OR MORE WINS . . .	259 (30%)
9 WINS	441 (52%)
8 WINS	131 (15%)
7 WINS	17 (2%)
6 WINS OR FEWER	5 (1%)

Zac Lee, but the wake up call at Blacksburg will propel this team to greatness, leading to a Big 12 championship appearance.

CORNHUSKER_FAN99

Nebraska could win 7 games with an inexperienced quarterback in the regular season. Losses to Virginia Tech, Missouri, Texas Tech, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado are likely.

All of these losses are away games except Texas Tech and Oklahoma. With luck, a win over Texas Tech at home would result in 7 wins. The probable scenario is a 7-5 regular season, which would be pretty good considering the schedule, during another transition year. All of you koolaide drinkers had better get a touch of reality because 2009 is going to be a struggle. I believe 2010, with an experienced quarterback, will be our breakout year.

RAYMON1

Head says 8 wins, heart says 9 wins, so I voted 9. VT & OU: probable losses; TT, KU, CU, MU, maybe Baylor are possible losses, if we win 3 of the last 5 thats 8-4.

BAMA_HUSKER

11-1... Yeah, I said 11-1 with our only loss to OU. We

should have beaten Va Tech last year, and we're better this year especially on D. Tech lost Harrell AND Crabtree to the pros, Mizzou lost a ton of offense, Kansas still stinks on defense, and we should win every other game handily thanks to a relatively weak schedule. Our offense is underrated, but our defense is going to be fantastic. Our d-line is best in the Big 12 with solid young LBs and an improving young secondary. Not to mention we have one of the best kicker/punters in the NCAA. I see us surprising everyone this year with an odd blowout loss to OU.

HUSKERS1

I see 10-2 in the regular season, with 9-3 also possible, but I like us against the North this season (5-0). So 10 wins with us winning the Holiday Bowl, hopefully against Oregon.

XHUSKERSX

Why is everyone saying we'll lose to Texas Tech? First of all we should have beat them last year at their place. They lost their two best players, plus their best offensive lineman. We are at home plus have way more talent. Their offense will not be enough this year with a new QB and Crabtree gone

against our vastly improved defense. I don't see any conceivable reason why we should lose other than the fact that we seem to always wind up with a disappointing unexpected loss or two.

HOUND1991

I think we win 9 games this season. The one thing I think

that really benefits a young, inexperienced quarterback is a good running game. We definitely have that, so it should help until Zac is able to be hitting all cylinders. Helu and Castille will take a lot of pressure off of him in the early games.

KEVIN1216

Cornhead Corner

definition: **CORNHEAD**, corn-head – noun

1. a person with an extreme and often unusual enthusiasm or zeal for the University of Nebraska Cornhusker athletic program. Side effects may manifest in abnormal collections of Husker memorabilia, obsessive desires to attend Nebraska sporting events and paranoid delusions that every season should result in a national championship. This compulsive behavior can be contagious and is often a serious irritant for fans of the University of Missouri or Colorado.



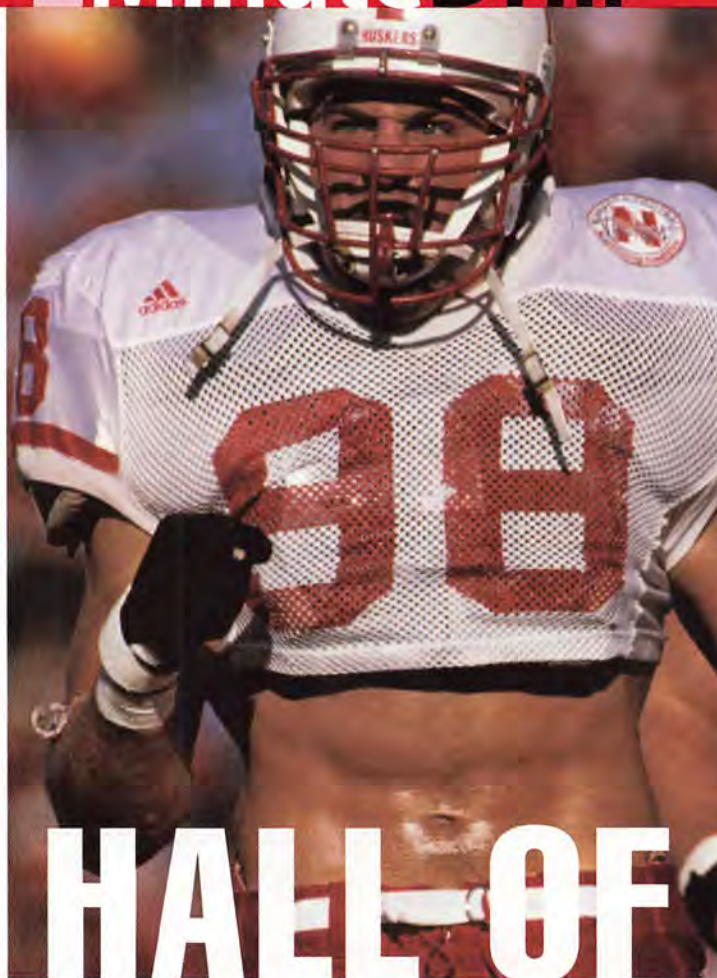
SEAN MURPHY (middle) of Omaha is a long-time *Huskies Illustrated* subscriber and a "life-long Husker fan." He and his friends James Kelsey (left) and Todd Hoffy (right) were so caught up after Nebraska's 32nd consecutive home victory, they agreed to get tattoos if Nebraska's home win streak ended. Two years later, on Oct. 31, 1998, after 47 consecutive home wins, Texas became the first unranked team to win at Memorial Stadium since 1978 with their 20-16 rally.

"As you can see, we all followed through on the bet and now proudly sport our Husker tats. We're still die hard Husker fans and meet in Lincoln almost every game to support our team."

Matching tattoos? That definitely qualifies as a Cornhead in our book!

ARE YOU A CORNHEAD? Send us your story along with a photo to huskiesillustrated@gmail.com and you may be featured in an upcoming issue of *Huskies Illustrated*.

2MinuteDrill



HUSKER HALL OF FAMERS

Ed Weir, Tackle (1923-25)	1951
George Sauer, Fullback (1931-33)	1954
Guy Chamberlin, End (1913-15)	1962
Clarence Swanson, End (1918-21)	1973
Sam Francis, Fullback (1934-36)	1977
Bobby Reynolds, Halfback (1950-52)	1984
Forrest Behm, Tackle (1938-40)	1988
Wayne Meylan, Middle Guard (1965-67)	1991
Bob Brown, Guard (1961-64)	1993
Rich Glover, Middle Guard (1970-72)	1995
Dave Rimington, Center (1979-82)	1997
Johnny Rodgers, Wingback (1970-72)	2000
Mike Rozier, I-back (1981-83)	2006
Grant Wistrom, Rush End (1994-97)	2009

[COACHES]

Fielding Yost (1898)	1951
Dana X. Bible (1929-36)	1951
Lawrence McCeney "Biff" Jones (1937-41)	1954
E.N. Robinson (1896-97)	1955
Bob Devaney (1962-72)	1981
Tom Osborne (1973-97)	1998

HALL OF FAMER

Huskies Illustrated, Nov. 5, 1994, *State of the Huskers*:

Given his small-town background and the fact that he won't celebrate his 19th birthday until July, it was reasonable to assume (Grant) Wistrom might sit out this season as a redshirt. Even Trev Alberts, to whom Wistrom has been compared in ability as well as personality, redshirted before earning the Big Eight coaches' vote as conference defensive freshman of the year in 1990. But Wistrom has played, and played well.

"We've had some good freshmen, but I can't ever remember a true freshman who had so much impact in so many ways," Cornhusker Coach Tom Osborne said recently of Wistrom. "He's playing at a level commensurate with a lot of our seniors."

Ironically, perhaps, **GRANT WISTROM** grew up an Oklahoma fan. And he took an official recruiting trip to Norman. He also visited Miami, not only because the Hurricanes were nationally prominent in the early 1990s but also because his family had lived in Florida for eight years.

His final three included Michigan and Stanford. "Most people back home (in Webb City, Mo.) wanted me to go to Nebraska," he told *Huskies Illustrated*. "I live in Big Eight country, and Nebraska is always one of the best teams in the Big Eight. So they figured that's where I should be."

When Wistrom arrived in Lincoln, **TOM OSBORNE** had yet to coach a national championship team. When Wistrom left, Osborne had three national championship trophies.

And Wistrom had contributed significantly to all three.

In late April, Wistrom became the 14th former Cornhusker player elected to the College Football Hall of Fame. The 2009 class will be inducted in New York City on Dec. 8.

Wistrom's response to his election was characteristic. "I know there are other deserving candidates from those teams," he said in a release. "I would like to specifically thank Coach Osborne, **CHARLIE MCBRIDE** and **TONY SAMUEL** for helping me develop to my full potential."

McBride was defensive coordinator. Samuel was Wistrom's position coach.

Wistrom was among the most decorated defensive players in school history. He was a two-time All-American and two-time Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year. He was the Big Eight Defensive Newcomer of the Year in 1994. And he won the Lombardi Award as a senior captain in 1997.

He also distinguished himself in the classroom. He was a two-time, first-team Academic All-American and among 16 Nebraska student-athletes to win the NCAA Top Eight Award. He was the Big 12 Male Athlete of the Year for 1997-98. And he earned the NFF/HOF

2MinuteDrill

Postgraduate Scholarship.

In addition, he could have left Nebraska as a first-round NFL draft pick following his junior season, but he returned to lead the Cornhuskers to a third national championship.

"Grant Wistrom was an ideal representative of University of Nebraska athletics," Osborne said.

That was apparent from the beginning.

In the Nov. 5, 1994 issue of *Huskers Illustrated*, Osborne compared Wistrom to Tommie Frazier and Will Shields, other Cornhuskers who played as true freshmen. Both needed "a little time to adjust from high school to college competition," Osborne said.

"Grant's been at that level almost from the first day."



WHAT IF?

Suppose **TOM OSBORNE** had accepted Colorado's offer to become the Buffaloes' head coach in 1978; how would that have changed the course of Cornhusker football history?

Or suppose **MIKE ROZIER** hadn't kept his commitment to the Cornhuskers out of high school following a season at Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College and opted to go elsewhere?

Such hypothetical questions make for interesting debate.

Here's another: Suppose **CARL CRAWFORD** had come to Nebraska to play football instead of signing with the Tampa Bay Rays as a second-round draft pick in 1999?

Former Cornhusker coach **FRANK SOLICH** offered an answer recently.



JAMMAL LORD

"If Carl would've been in the program, **JAMMAL LORD** would've been a strong safety, and Jammal would probably still be playing pro ball," Solich told the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

Crawford, a quarterback from Houston in the same recruiting class as Lord, made headlines in early May by stealing a major league record-tying six bases in a game against the Boston Red Sox.

The Rays' outfielder, in his eighth big league season, has led the American League in stolen bases four times (2003, 04, 06, 07) and triples three times (2004, 05, 06).

At 6-foot-2 and 210 pounds, with that speed, the SuperPrep All-American would have been difficult to stop on options – he rushed for 1,200 yards and 14 touchdowns as a high school senior.

SIDELINES



RIMINGTON WATCH LIST

JACOB HICKMAN might be the starting center this season, as he was last. Or he might be a starting guard, as he was the season before last. That won't be determined until fall.

But a measure of the respect the senior from Bakersfield, Calif., has earned as a center is reflected his being among 44 players on the Rimington Trophy Watch List, released in late May.

The award, presented annually by the Boomer Esiason Foundation to the nation's top collegiate center, is named in honor of former Cornhusker center **DAVE RIMINGTON** (1979-82), a two-time All-American and the only player to win the Outland Trophy twice.

Rimington is president of the Foundation.

The winner is the player who receives the most first-team All-America votes from the American Football Coaches Association, the Walter Camp Foundation, The Sporting News and the Football Writers Association of America. Former Cornhusker Dominic Raiola was the trophy's first winner in 2000.

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CODY GLENN

Huskers in the Draft

CODY GLENN, who switched from I-back to linebacker before his senior season, was the first of three Cornhuskers selected in the NFL draft. The Washington Redskins picked him in the fifth round, the 158th pick overall. The last time the first Cornhusker was picked that low was 1970, when the first were tight end Jim McFarland and linebacker Ken Geddes, both in the seventh round.

Offensive linemen **MATT SLAUSON** and **LYDON MURTHA** were the others drafted, Slauson by the New York Jets in the sixth round (193rd), Murtha by the

Detroit Lions in the seventh round (288). Yes, Slauson has been re-united with **BILL CALLAHAN**, Jets offensive line coach and associate head coach.

After the draft, six Huskers signed as free agents: I-back **MARLON LUCKY** (Bengals), wide receiver **TODD PETERSON** (Jaguars), defensive end **ZACH POTTER** (Jets), wide receiver **NATE SWIFT** (Broncos), defensive tackle **TY STEINKUHLER** (Bengals) and quarterback **JOE GANZ** (Redskins).

Washington also signed former Missouri quarterback Chase Daniel as a free agent.

SIDELINES



**ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
ALBERTS**

Former Cornhusker All-American and Butkus Award winner

TREV ALBERTS was named athletic director at the University of Nebraska-Omaha in early May, leading to speculation that his goal might be to succeed **TOM OSBORNE**. Alberts was among 82 finalists for this year's induction into the College Football Hall of Fame, along with **WILL SHIELDS** and **GRANT WISTROM** – who was selected.

OOPS

CODY GLENN, the first former Cornhusker selected in the NFL draft, caused a stir by telling reporters the reason he was suspended for the final four games last season because he had sold tickets, a violation of NCAA rules. He subsequently admitted that he had lied.

"It was just so people would kind of leave me alone," he told the Associated Press.



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TACKLE AND TIGHT END

Mike Smith is the returning starter at left tackle in the offensive line. And that's where he'll stay. But tight ends coach Ron Brown wouldn't mind having the junior from Las Vegas in his group, even though the position is among the deepest on the team.

"Absolutely," said Brown. "He's very athletic."

Smith, who was recruited as a defensive end, played tight end on offense in high school.

Brown coached wide receivers and tight ends during his first stint at Nebraska and discussed playing tight end with one of the best tackles in school history.

"I had talks with Zach Wiegert back in the day," Brown said. "He would come over and talk to me all the time. Oh, my goodness, he would have been a great tight end. He'd have been fun."

Wiegert won the Outland Trophy in 1994.

SIDELINES



TOUGH TO RECOGNIZE

Former Cornhusker center Brett Byford (2006-07) ran his first marathon in Lincoln in the spring, finishing in 5 hours, 24 minutes and 38 seconds. But that's not the story. The story is, the 6-foot-3 Byford weighed 300 pounds when he played for Nebraska and he weighs about 225 now.

ZAC ATTACK

Quarterback Zac Lee can add a dimension to the offense. "He's very athletic," coach Bo Pelini said during the Big 12 coaches' spring teleconference. "He can run. Obviously, I think he can add an element there. I mean, Joe (Ganz) also showed that he could run last year, but I think that Zac is maybe a little bit faster. Hopefully, it will just make us that much more multiple."

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Probably, only the most dedicated Nebraska football fan, someone who scrutinizes every page of the

Cornhusker media guide, would notice the change. The page of first-team Academic All-Americans in the 2008 guide includes one more photo than the page in the 2007 guide, even though no Cornhuskers earned first-team Academic All-America honors in 2007.

Oh yes, **BOB OBERLIN** would have noticed because his is the additional photo. Finally, 55 years after earning first-team Academic All-America recognition as a junior center and linebacker for coach **BILL GLASSFORD** in 1953, he was acknowledged for his classroom accomplishments.

Not until 2005, when he came to Nebraska from his retirement home in Sarasota, Fla., for a reunion of the 1955 Orange Bowl team, did Oberlin realize he wasn't on the list.

Turns out his Academic All-America honors – he also was recognized in 1952 – were bestowed by a sports publicist at SMU, Lester Jordan, while the acknowledged Academic All-America listing by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) wasn't established until 1957.

Four other non-CoSIDA Cornhusker Academic All-Americans were listed: Don Fricke (1960), Pat Clare (1960), Jim Osberg (1965) and Tony Jeter (1965).

But not Oberlin, who asked **DENNIS LEBLANC**, senior associate athletic director for academics, compliance and planning, why.

Three years later, CoSIDA certified Oberlin's selection and now he's first on the list of Nebraska's nation-leading 98 football All-Americans, a total that includes repeat winners as well as second- and third-team selections. The Cornhuskers have produced 67 first-teamers.

Brandenburgh completed his eligibility in 2007, Stuntz in 2005.

As for Oberlin, in addition to being included first on the list (in any sport at Nebraska) with a photo in the media guide, his portrait hangs on the wall of honor in West Stadium.

For the record, Nebraska included media-guide photos of its Academic All-Americans beginning in 1972, Bob Devaney's final season as coach. Tom



Todd Peterson and Tyler Wortman earned second-team Academic All-America honors last season as seniors. Wortman, who carried a 3.95 grade-point average in a mechanical engineering major, was among five former Cornhuskers who received degrees at spring commencement in May.

The others were: Zach Potter, Matt Slauson, Lance Brandenburgh and Mike Stuntz.

Osborne coordinated the team's academic counseling at the time, and there were only six photos, with Jim Huges's (1962) the first.

Dennis Claridge's (1963) was second, followed by Osberg's and Jeter's, Marvin Mueller's (1966), Randy Reeves's (1969), Jeff Kinney's (1971) and Larry Jacobson's (1971).

Much has changed since then. Anyone would notice that.

2MinuteDrill

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

Tim Griffin of ESPN.com recently tallied the conference records (including championship games) of every Big 12 football coach since play began in 1996. The most successful, by percentage were:

1. **TOM OSBORNE, NEBRASKA**.....17-1 (.944)
2. Bob Stoops, Oklahoma73-14 (.839)
3. Mack Brown, Texas73-18 (.802)
4. **FRANK SOLICH, NEBRASKA**..... 34-15 (.694)

Turns out .694 (and .753 overall) wasn't worth much to Solich as far as then-athletic director **STEVE PEDERSON** was concerned.

PRAISE FOR "WATS"



With Greg Paulus and Robert Marve both including Nebraska among the schools to which they might transfer, coach Bo Pelini

was asked during the Big 12 coaches' spring teleconference if the Cornhuskers needed to add a quarterback as a result of Patrick Witt's transfer.

Witt, a 4.0 student, transferred to Yale, by the way.

"No, not necessarily," Pelini said. "You're always looking to upgrade your team and looking to add players, but it has to be the right situation and the right guy. I'd never say no, never, but I like the way our young guys developed (in the spring). I thought Kody Spano, Cody Green, even Latravis Washington, they came a long way, and I have confidence in what those guys bring, what they can do.

"And fortunately for us, we've got a great guy coaching them. I think Coach (Shawn) Watson is as good as there is at coaching quarterbacks. We'll be well-equipped at the quarterback position because the talent is there, and we'll get them coached up."

GROUND BOUND

Shawn Watson's offense is again looking for balance, with continued improvement in the running game. The Cornhuskers ranked 37th nationally in rushing last season, averaging 169.8 yards per game and 4.5 yards per rush. Their averages were 144.4 and 4.2 in 2007.

Emphasis on the running game was apparent during the spring.

"Our offense is known for smash-mouth football, pushing guys around, getting in and out of the huddle, up and down," said senior wide receiver Chris Brooks. "That's what he (Watson) wants. And that's what he's going to get. He's not going to settle for mediocrity, and neither is Coach Bo."

Brooks and the other wide receivers contribute as blockers, of course.



SIDELINES



BY THE NUMBERS

Not many tight ends wear jersey numbers in the 40s. But junior Mike McNeill does. The reason? "It was actually my grandpa's number, and that's why I took it up," said McNeill, the team's top returning receiver. "He went to Central Michigan and then played minor league baseball.

"In high school when I asked for it, they told me I couldn't have it. They said tight ends don't wear 44. Then I told them why I wanted it, and they ended up letting me have it."

Junior Dreu Young, also a tight end, wears No. 49. "I don't know what his deal is. I think he just wanted to have a higher number than mine," McNeill said with a laugh.

Kyler Reed, a redshirted freshman tight end, tops both of them. He wears No. 25.

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Jeff Quinn

Fully loaded on lifetime experiences

SAY THIS ABOUT Jeff Quinn. Since the day Tom Osborne offered the multi-talented quarterback of a 3-6 Ord (Neb.) High School team a Husker football scholarship, life has never been dull, and purpose has never been a problem.

Once you learn how to focus from a Hall of Fame coach, no mountain seems too high to climb. So come all without and come all within, you'll not see nothing like the mighty Quinn, who's been downloading experiences so fast that Bob Dylan's lyrics can cover his life, too.

Busy doesn't begin to describe why a popular quarterback waited until he was 38 to get married.

Now, 13 years later, Jeff Quinn can say he's seen – and done –nearly everything that he's wanted to do.

Yes, the best of times for Jeff Quinn,



the man, obscures the worst of times for Jeff Quinn, the quarterback who ...

► As he was rolling left, was hit and fumbled at the Florida State 3-yard line in the last 13 seconds of an 18-16 loss to the Seminoles.

► Had his heart ripped out twice in last-minute losses to Oklahoma (17-14 and 21-17).

► Was able to optimize virtually every ounce of his ability and learn nearly every nuance Osborne could teach him about the option game.

Quinn guided Nebraska to a 10-2 record in 1980. The Huskers averaged 39.1 points a game, winning by 57 over Iowa and by 14 at Penn State. Their only losses were nail-biters against Florida State and Oklahoma when those flea-flicking Sooners pulled a rabbit out of a hat, so they could eat stone crabs in Miami while the Huskers dined on tacos in El Paso.

"Barry Switzer and I have had a few laughs about that one, but for some reason, he thinks it's funnier than I do," said Quinn, who also received an empathetic letter from Bobby Bowden days after his fumble ended what looked like a well-executed, game-winning drive.

"Even Roger Craig tried to convince me that he was more responsible for that loss than I was because he thinks he should have scored on the play before I fumbled," Quinn said. "It still hurts, but it's pretty hard to complain about anything that happens when you give everything you have."

It's been a great ride for 51 years, and here's just part of the mighty Quinn's unique resume:

► A stint with the Pittsburgh Steelers when Mark Malone injured his knee in 1982 and a year with the New Orleans Breakers in the USFL.

► A tight friendship with Terry Bradshaw, the Steelers' Hall of Fame quarterback, former teammate and



JEFF QUINN

LETTERS: 1978-80

POSITION: Quarterback

CURRENT: Entrepreneur, Keller, Texas

WIFE: Susan

CHILDREN: Grace (10), Maggie (5)

STEPCHILDREN: Michael (19), Scott (17)

business partner for 17 years.

► Three years as the offensive coordinator at La Costa Canyon High School in Encinitas, Calif., where he also worked as a mortgage broker.

► Friendships with Howie Long, Jimmy Johnson and James Brown, Bradshaw's NFL co-hosts at Fox, a sports network Quinn supported for years with interviews and statistical analysis.

Quinn today is director of product development for the sports division of Impact Gel, a competitor of Dr. Scholl's insoles, among other things.

"We're in with NBA and NHL teams, NASCAR and a growing list of major colleges," Quinn said. "We're making products for boxing, skiing and surfing. We even made the flak jacket for Bret Favre."

Sounds like someone who spent years in highly analytical quarterback meetings. "I still cherish being around Coach Osborne," Quinn said. "I have so much love and respect for that man that I think about him every single day. I mean, there wasn't anything he couldn't do." **N**



STATE OF THE HUSKERS

BY CURT MCKEEVER

New QB? Big 12 title won't come easy

HANDICAPPING THE Big 12 Conference field shouldn't be so simple as looking at who's playing quarterback. But if you're banking on a first-time starter leading your team to a league championship, good luck with that.

In the conference's 13-year history, Oklahoma's Sam Bradford (in 2007) is the only signal-caller who in his first season as the starter tasted a title.

(Note: Sooner fans could argue Paul Thompson also did it in 2006. But Thompson had begun his career at quarterback and started one game in 2005 before moving to wide receiver and then back behind center after Rhett Bomar was dismissed just before the '06 season-opener.)

No matter how you want to interpret that situation, it's clear that as sharp as Zac Lee looked during Nebraska's spring game, he faces some pretty long odds in trying to steer the Huskers to the top.

So, too, will two others on teams that had as good a league record as anybody in their division last season - North champ Missouri and Texas Tech in the South. Sophomore Blaine Gabbert will be taking over for Chase Daniel, the most productive quarterback in Missouri history, while Tech goes from All-American Graham Harrell to Taylor Potts, a fourth-year junior who has played in 14 games.

If you believe the experienced-quarterback theory, then Oklahoma, with the Heisman Trophy-winning Bradford returning to try and get that elusive national title, and Texas, with the record-setting and Heisman runner-up Colt McCoy, figure to have the inside track on getting to the Big

12 championship game at the new Dallas Cowboys Stadium.

Tim Griffin of ESPN.com rates Bradford (23-5 as a starter) and McCoy (32-7) 1-2 on his list of the top 40 players in the Big 12. But if his rankings are accurate (and Griffin has been covering the league since its inception), then perhaps Baylor and Oklahoma State will make a strong push in the South. After all, he lists Baylor sophomore quarterback Robert Griffin at No. 5 and Oklahoma State senior Zac Robinson at No. 17.

As for the North, Griffin must like Kansas' chances, as Todd Reesing comes in at No. 10. Looked over coming out of Lake Travis High in Austin, Texas, Reesing has been nothing short of spectacular for the Jayhawks the past two seasons. He's 20-6 as a starter and last year set KU single-season records for passing yards (3,888) and 300-yard games (eight) and came one touchdown pass shy of matching his record of 32.

Reesing alone makes Kansas a sensible pre-season favorite in the North. He'll also have two big-time receivers in Dezmon Briscoe and Kerry Meier, and the Jayhawks should be better defensively even though they'll be replacing all three starting linebackers.

After Reesing, Colorado has the most-experienced quarterback in the North in Cody Hawkins. The junior is 10-13 as a starter, but sophomore Tyler Hansen (who won his only start) is considered a strong challenger. Hansen suffered a thumb injury in the Buffs' spring game that required surgery, leaving him out until June and

likely meaning the CU quarterback race will drag into the dog days of August.

Whether or not the Buffs end up with a veteran quarterback, one thing not to overlook about them is that they play Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri in Boulder. The biggest question mark about Colorado may center on new offensive coordinator-quarterbacks coach Eric Kiesau. After spring practice, he was promoted from receivers coach and passing game coordinator when Mark Helfrich left for Oregon.

Missouri, which has played for the last two Big 12 championships, has two new coordinators, but the hottest off-season topic is Gabbert, whom Nebraska fans know originally committed to the Huskers. Besides replacing the beloved Daniel, Gabbert faces additional pressure since the Tigers also lost record-setting wide receiver Jeremy Maclin and tight end Chase Coffman.

Bradford's biggest challenge to making it three Big 12 titles in a row could be operating behind a line that will have four new starters. He'll also have a new set of receivers.

And beating McCoy won't be easy. The senior has won more games than any Longhorns quarterback, owns nearly every major passing record at Texas (last year he completed an NCAA record 76.7 percent of his passes), and most of his targets will be back in 2009.

But even if the Longhorns or Sooners or Jayhawks or Buffaloes had little more than their returning quarterbacks, the history of the Big 12 tells us they'd still have a head start to winning a championship. **N**

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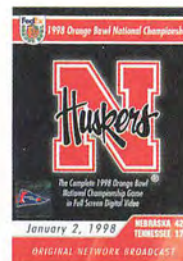
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DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

BY JOHN TALMAN
RECRUITING PUBLISHER,
HUSKERSILLUSTRATED.COM

NCAA rules help Texas lock down borders

CONSISTENTLY, NEBRASKA fans talk about an uneven playing field when it comes to geographical considerations in recruiting. Such talk usually focuses on not having the population advantages that conference foes such as Texas and Texas A&M have.

The differences in population between the Big 12 North states and Texas alone are clear, but think about something else that adds to the challenge for the Huskers: That is the way the NCAA rules are set up for recruiting visits.

Texas has jumped to the forefront in developing a successful system of recruiting. The Longhorns will announce a class on signing day, like every program in the country. Then, also in February, sometimes the following weekend, multiple junior days are held where prospects from inside the Lone Star State make their way to Austin on unofficial visits – the prospects have to pay their own way.

The Longhorns offer scholarships to several of those juniors in attendance and usually sew up the majority of their class with double-digit commitments as they coast into the rest of the spring. This allows them not only to be even more selective with any remaining scholarships to fill but also to get a jump on looking ahead to the next class after just a few months.

Sounds simple enough, right?

It is, or it is if you're a successful program in a heavily populated state with rules that are set up for you to succeed, given the

current NCAA recruiting calendar.

Junior days that fall in the late winter and early spring leave the cost up to the player and his family. That, by definition, is an "unofficial" visit. It isn't as big of a deal when a prospect is driving from Houston to Austin. It's a much bigger task to ask a prospect to drive from Houston to Lincoln, Neb.

The five allowed official visits, where the expenses are covered for the prospects, don't begin until the recruit's senior year. So while Nebraska may be sending handwritten mail and receiving a phone call now and then from a recruit, many Husker targets may not be able to afford to take a trip to Lincoln that early.

Before coaches at Big 12 North schools know it, with only one allowed phone call to a prospect before that fall, commitments are rolling in for Big 12 South competitors.

Why? Many times the prospect was going to go there regardless. Like several in Nebraska, recruits want to stay in-state where their families can see them play. However, many never even had the chance to compare it to a school that is a little farther from home.

Nebraska won't stop recruiting Texas. In fact, the Huskers managed to sign top prospects from the state from the day Bo Pelini started in Lincoln. Some of those include heralded running back Rex Burkhead, Parade All-America linebacker Chris Williams and four-star quarterback Cody Green.

However, there was a long list of Nebraska targets in Texas with Husker offers. And several of those never saw Memorial Stadium up close before seeing a nearby school and making an early decision.

In the early 1980's, schools inside the Lone Star State were part of a decaying Southwest Conference. As air travel expanded and television exposure increased, it was easier for schools such as Nebraska, Florida State and Notre Dame to be seen in living rooms of prospects who were considering leaving Texas and the SWC for conferences such as the Big Eight.

"Notre Dame would cherry-pick, and then in the 1980's new teams like Southern Cal and BYU would come down to get speed," former Baylor coach Grant Teaff told Rivals.com in 2006. "It was especially true for teams from the North where speed was not a forte."

Geography hasn't changed. Neither has the ability of states such as Texas to put out top football prospects. The conference has changed, and it's fairly obvious that it's much easier for a high school athlete in Texas to keep his visits inside state borders. That's tough when schools in the Big 12 North and South are vying for the conference crown every year.

While the early signing-day-period discussion is important, maybe what's more important is allowing an "even playing field" to give prospects a chance to see more college options. **N**

All-California Husker Team

OFFENSE

WR	*Maurice Purify (2006-07), Eureka
WR	Tim Smith (1977-79), Chula Vista
WR	Abdul Muhammad (1991-94), Compton
TE	Sheldon Jackson (1995-98), Diamond Bar
OL	*Bob Newton (1969-70), La Mirada
OL	Brendan Stai (1991-94), Yorba Linda
OL	*Dick Rupert (1970-71), Los Angeles
OL	James Sherman (1996-99), LaVerne
OL	Dan Vili Waldrop (2000-03), Wilmington
QB	Steve Taylor (1985-88), Fresno
QB	#Vince Ferragamo (1975-76), Carson
RB	Lawrence Phillips (1993-95), West Covina
RB	Derek Brown (1990-92), La Habra
RB	@Jarvis Redwine (1979-80), Inglewood
PK	Jordan Congdon (2005-06), San Diego



DEFENSE

DL	Ron Pruitt (1973-74, 76), Compton
DL	Rod Horn (1977-79), Fresno
DL	Willie Griffin (1986-88), Monrovia
DL	Benard Thomas (2000-01, 03-04), East Palo Alto
DL	*Ola Dagunduro (2005-06), Inglewood
LB	*Bob Terrio (1970-71), Fullerton
LB	*Brent Williams (1978-80), Los Angeles
LB	Mike Petko (1989-91), Anaheim
DB	Ralph Brown (1996-99), Hacienda Heights
DB	Michael Booker (1994-96), Oceanside
DB	*Mark Heydorff (1973-74), La Crescenta
DB	*Zavan Yaralian (1972-73), Inglewood
P	*Scott Livingston (1983-84), Lakewood

*Junior college transfer, #Transfer from California

@Transfer from Oregon State

Players from California high schools, even if they went to junior colleges elsewhere



All-Texas Husker Team

OFFENSE

WR	Terrence Nunn (2004-07), Houston
WR	Corey Dixon (1991-93), Dallas
TE	Junior Miller (1977-79), Midland
OL	Aaron Taylor (1994-97), Wichita Falls
OL	Jake Young (1986-89), Midland
OL	Aaron Graham (1992-95), Denton
OL	Kelvin Clark (1976-78), Odessa
OL	Doug Glaser (1987-89), Balch Springs
QB	Turner Gill (1981-83), Fort Worth
RB	Rick Berns (1976-78), Wichita Falls
RB	Rudy Johnson (1961-63), Aransas Pass
PK	Kris Brown (1995-98), Southlake

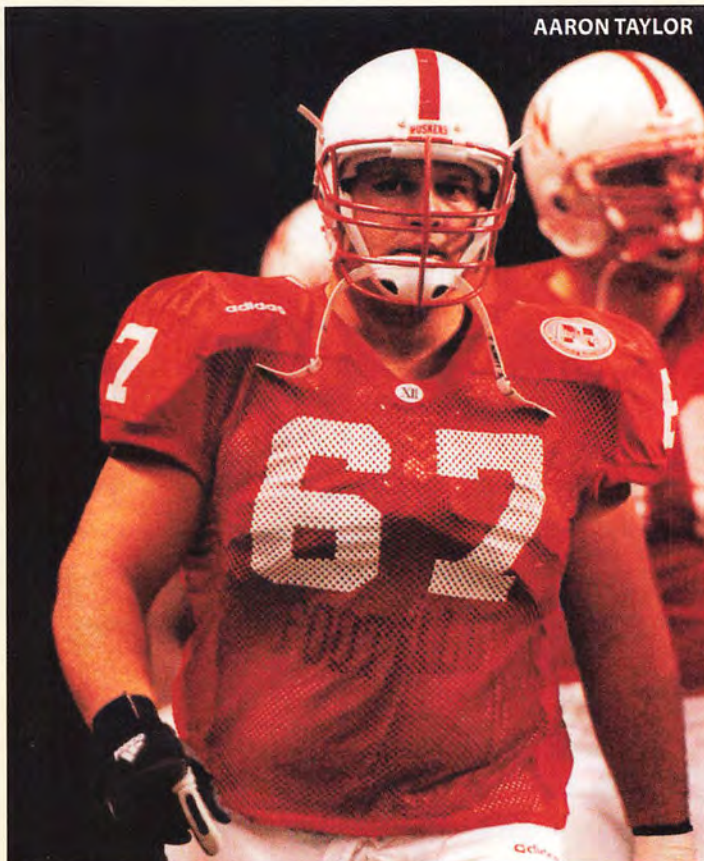


OFFENSE

DL	#David Clark (1978-80), Odessa
DL	Kenny Walker (1989-90), Crane
LB	Broderick Thomas (1985-88), Houston
LB	Travis Hill (1989-92), Pearland
LB	*Demorrio Williams (2002-03), Beckville
LB	Octavious McFarlin (1994-97), Bastrop
LB	T.J. Hollowell (2000-03), Copperas Cove
DB	Keyuo Craver (1999-01), Harleton
DB	John Reece (1989, 91-93), Houston
DB	Joe Walker (1997-00), Arlington
DB	*Tim Jackson (1987-88), Dallas
DB	Sammy Sims (1979-81), Lubbock
DB	Clint Finley (1997-00), Cuero
P	@Byron Bennett (1990-93), Rowlett

*Junior college transfer, #Transfer from Texas-El Paso
@No. 1 punter in 1993

Players from Texas high schools, even if they went to junior colleges elsewhere



More in Missouri?

BY RICK SHAW

Nebraska received its fourth commitment for the recruiting class of 2010, wide receiver **KEESTON TERRY** from Blue Springs (Mo.). The 6-foot-2 1/2, 179-pound standout is widely considered to be one of the top prospects in the state and is rated among the top 250 players nationally by Rivals.com.

However, the Huskers are hoping Terry is just the first of a few talented prospects in Missouri that will be casting their lot with the Big Red.

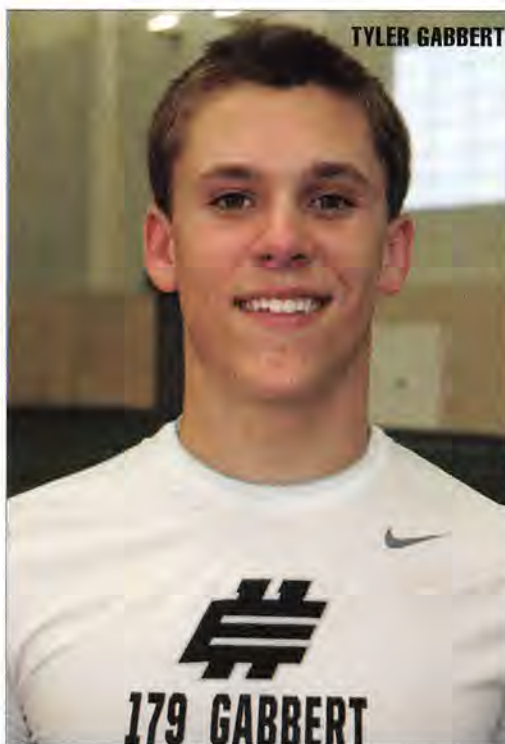
Two years ago, **BLAINE GABBERT** was a highly touted quarterback prospect recruited by colleges all over the country. After initially committing to Nebraska, he changed his mind and signed with Missouri. He's now the early favorite to replace Chase Daniel as the starting signal-caller in Columbia this fall.

This year, his younger brother **TYLER GABBERT** has the spotlight, and the 6-foot, 190-pound gunslinger out of Ballwin (Mo.) Parkway West has the Huskers on his short list.

"Coach (**SHAWN**) **WATSON** told me that they've re-evaluated my film and that I'm the guy on their board," Gabbert said. "And they want me to be a Husker, and help out this recruiting class."

"Obviously, Nebraska is up there along with Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, the schools I'm most familiar with. I haven't said no or turned any schools down yet."

Gabbert, rated the nation's No. 14 pro-



style quarterback prospect (four stars) by Rivals, threw for 1,850 yards and 18 touchdowns as a junior. He holds offers from Colorado State, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Wyoming, with several other schools showing interest. He said he expects to announce his college decision sometime soon.

"I honestly couldn't tell you," Gabbert said about when he's targeting a decision date. "It will be sooner than later, but I don't have (an exact date) or something like that."

Another four-star prospect, wide receiver **MARCUS LUCAS** out of Liberty, Mo., Senior High, is also considering Nebraska. The 6-5, 195-pound blue-chipper visited Nebraska for the spring game in April

and came away impressed with the experience.

"It was packed," Lucas said, "and you definitely got a good feeling for how it would be on an actual game day. It definitely shows how people in the state admire the football team. There was definitely a 'wow' factor knowing that all those people were there for a spring game."

Lucas hauled in 60 catches for approximately 1,200 yards and 18 scores as a junior. Rivals ranks him as the nation's No. 18 wide receiver prospect and among the top 250 prospects overall. He holds offers from Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kansas State, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Stanford and UCLA, among others, but insists that he has yet to narrow his list to a top group.

Florissant (Mo.) McCluer North offensive tackle **JOE BURGESS** freely admits that he holds one school a bit higher than the rest heading into the summer. However, the 6-6, 300-pounder said he doesn't plan to pull the trigger on a college commitment for a few months yet.

"I like Nebraska so far from what I've seen of them on TV," Burgess said. "I really want to get out there to check it out and get a different perspective on it all. I've talked to **KEITH WILLIAMS**, who went to McCluer North but plays up there now, and he told me that the coaches there really know how to treat the players. He really likes it there."

“NEBRASKA IS

“Nebraska is absolutely my top school right now, but I’d rather take as much time as possible before making a decision.”

A two-year starter at offensive tackle, Burgess earned second-team all-

OFFENSIVE LINE PROSPECT JOE BURGESS

conference honors as a junior in 2008. Playing in a run-oriented offense, he helped pave the way for starting running back **DAMONTE BELL** to rush for over 1,000 yards.

Though his only offer at this point is from Nebraska, he’s also getting heavy interest from Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin, Kansas State and Kansas.

Another offensive tackle from Missouri, **NICK DEMIEN** of Wentzville Timberland, has no shortage of offers. Rated among the top 100 prospects in the country by Rivals (four stars), Demien has accumulated tenders from all over the country, besides Nebraska. He said he plans to give the Huskers a hard look before making his decision.

“I know they are a big rival of Missouri and have a good program,” Demien said. “I just have to learn more. I’ll definitely drive up and check them out at some point.”

Demien helped lead the Timberland rushing attack that saw running back (and Wisconsin 2009 signee) **MONTEE BALL** rush for over 3,000 yards and 32 scores in 2008.

Though currently committed to Missouri, athlete **MARQUISE HILL** out of St. Louis Trinity Catholic is still considering other options, including an offer from Nebraska. The 6-foot, 165-pound speedster (4.49-second 40-yard dash) visited on the

Husker junior day in February and had good things to say about Lincoln.

“I think they’re getting a lot of good athletes going

up there from all over,” Hill said. “If you’re a patient person and looking for a school on the rise, Nebraska is a place like that. I do like the coaches there a lot too. That’s a good thing.

“Right now, I’m still committed to Missouri but I want to take my time a bit and check out a few of these other schools too. Sometime next fall, I’ll get it all solidified.”

Hill had over 1,000 yards rushing and receiving as a junior with 14 touchdowns. He’s also considering offers from UCLA, Kansas State, Arkansas and Kansas.

On the other side of the ball, defensive end **CHASE ROME** of Columbia (Mo.) Rock Bridge is one of the best in the country. Rated a four-star prospect by Rivals, the 6-3, 280-pounder committed to Oklahoma State in late March. However, he said he’ll still, more than likely, visit Lincoln at some point to take a closer look at the Husker program.

“I’m still very solid to Oklahoma State,” Rome said. “I still plan to check out Nebraska sometime this summer or in the fall, though. I’m a big fan of college football. Nebraska has been recruiting me for a while now and it’s pretty close. I figure why not.”

The Huskers already have added one of the premier players from Missouri to their 2010 commit list. With the interest they’re getting from other top prospects, it would be a bit surprising if Terry were the last. **N**

SIDELINES

DETAILED NOTES

Senior offensive lineman **DEREK MEYER** has only one season of eligibility remaining because he transferred within the Big 12 – from Kansas State – and conference rules require the loss of two seasons of eligibility instead of one, the penalty for transferring to a school outside the conference.

As a result, “he’s very hungry,” offensive line coach **BARNEY COTTON** said during spring practice. “You can see it right on his chest: I’ve got one year, and I’m going to make the most of it.”

“I tell you what, I’m going to have to get him another notebook, probably, because as we meet, we expect our guys to take notes ... and I’ve never seen a guy take more detailed notes. He’s sitting in that front row, and he’s writing everything I put on that board.”

FAVORITE RECEIVER

ZAC LEE has thrown two passes during his Cornhusker career, one complete. **WES CAMMACK** has caught one pass during this Cornhusker career, from Lee. Late in the fourth quarter of last season’s 38-7 victory against New Mexico State, on third-and-22 at the Aggies’ 22-yard line, Lee threw a pass intended for Cammack. He left it “a little behind Wes, so that’s a little bit upsetting,” he said in the spring.

On the next play, he threw to Cammack again, this time complete for 5 yards.



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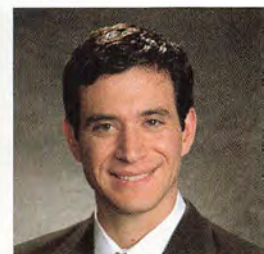
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Recruiting Notebook

Filling the need at WR

by Sean Stevens

Nebraska is looking to take two or three wide receivers in this year's recruiting class. One of those spots has been filled by Blue Springs, Mo., four-star prospect **KEESTON TERRY**.

"This past month, I was mainly thinking about it, and I felt like I grew a close relationship with Nebraska this past spring," said the 6-foot-2 1/2, 179-pound Terry. "I felt my relationship there was what brought me there."

Blue Springs head coach Kelly Donohoe talked about what his star player brings to the table.

"He could be a playmaker as a running back, receiver or safety, but he's hoping to play receiver at Nebraska," Donohoe said. "He can go deep or across the middle equally well. He has great hands."

"At the same time, he could be a great safety. He's about 6-2½ and he will be 6-3 by the time he gets to Nebraska. He has a good frame that he should easily fill out to 200 pounds."

Donohoe said that Terry also excels off the field.

"Usually, a kid like that, who's a big stud, some people will have a problem with him, but our faculty and students love him. As a junior, Keeton was one of four finalists for the Simonne Award which goes to the top player in Kansas City. When his name was announced there was a loud cheer, and it even came from our opponent schools' fans. There's just something special about him."

SLOAN COMMITTED, BUT 'OPEN'

When West Helena, Ark., four-star cornerback **ANTERIO SLOAN** (5-10, 165) committed to Nebraska sight-unseen in early April, many wondered if his commitment would stick. Although he remains pledged to the Huskers, Sloan has admitted to looking around a bit lately.

"To tell you the truth though, I am opening my recruitment up a bit. Since I haven't been up to Lincoln and actually seen everything, there isn't a real big connection yet. I'm still committed to (Nebraska) and plan to go there, but if another school comes along, I plan on looking into it."

Other schools are 'coming along' to see Sloan this spring.

"Alabama and Mississippi State have both been by to watch one of our spring practices," Sloan said. "Mississippi State said they'll be offering. I have my ears open to both of them."

"My coach is also taking me to a couple of individual camps in July, too – Arkansas and Ole Miss," said Sloan. "He's trying to get a few of us on the team some attention."

The Huskers still have his pledge, though, and Sloan plans to give them every opportunity to keep it.

"I'm still going to visit Nebraska no matter what," he said. "It would help a lot if I could get up there and see it for myself. Basically, if I go up there and love how the coaching staff and the campus and stuff feel, it's a done deal to Nebraska. But since I haven't seen them yet, I'm open to everyone." **N**

SIDELINES



FACE LIFT

Memorial Stadium began to undergo a facelift in May as construction crews worked to install new high-definition video board on the northwest and northeast towers. The project will include new ribbon boards on the east and west facade that will stretch endzone to endzone and new video boards behind each goal post. The HuskerVision control room will also be replaced with a high-def control room for the 2009 season.

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

There's never an extended break for football players. "You can't just drop football and then all of a sudden pick it up in August and just work out and be prepared for the team and where we have to go," coach Bo Pelini said with summer at-hand. "We have a long way to go as a football team, and we need to use every day, and each player needs to work on their own stuff."

"I think we have a mature enough group that the kids understand what's at stake, and we'll be able to get that done."

2010 Nebraska Commitment List (4)

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (School)
Mike Moudy	OL	6-7	291	Castle Rock, Colo.
Andrew Rodriguez	OT	6-6	300	Aurora, Neb. (Aurora)
Anterio Sloan	DB	5-10	165	West Helena, Ark. (Central)
Keeton Terry	WR	6-2	179	Blue Springs, Mo.

For 29 years, HI has been there

It's been a quarter-century since I used to hang out in these pages. Huskers

Illustrated made its debut in the fall of 1981, and I was its first Nebraska-resident editor.

This window to Cornhusker athletics was born in, of all places, Oklahoma. University Sports Publications in Tulsa had produced a successful Sooners Illustrated magazine, chronicling University of Oklahoma sports, and it wanted to expand north.

Initially, Managing Editor Wayne Bishop, an old sports-writing friend from the Tulsa World, tried to cover the Huskers from down south with a couple of local freelance writers in Lincoln. I contributed to the third issue and then became editor for the fourth.

It was only a couple of years for me, but they were the formative years for a venture that has persevered through various publishers and editors for nearly 29 seasons and 500 issues.

What a glorious 2 1/2-year stint it was!

My watch included three consecutive high-drama Orange Bowls, back-to-back 12-1 football seasons in 1982 and '83 and Mike Rozier's Heisman campaign. The lone loss in '82 was at Happy Valley in the infamous Penn State wide-field game. A 21-20 head-banger over Louisiana State wrapped it up in the Orange Bowl. Miami's epic upset in the Stacked Deck Bowl the next year was the sole blemish

[BY TOM ASH]

for the most explosive offensive team that I've ever seen.

Huskers Illustrated stories during that stretch included Tom Osborne's 100th victory as head coach and how he couldn't quite close the deal in his quest for a first national championship. He closed the

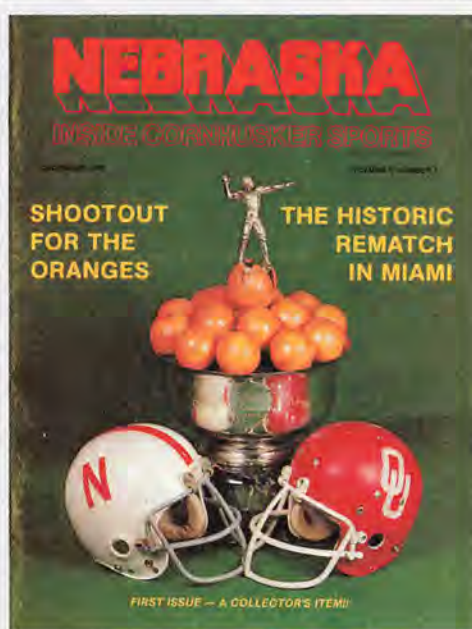
ride following my final game with the magazine and the most celebrated failed two-point conversion in college football history. The Husker team was headed back to the Fontainebleau Hotel from the Orange Bowl following the 31-30 upset loss to Miami.

Tom Osborne had shunned an extra-point

kick and certain national championship for a two-point pass from Turner Gill to Jeff Smith. It was tipped away, and Dean Steinkhuler, the most celebrated lineman in the country, was reflecting on the previous four hours and his five years as a Husker. "We learned to be winners, and, hopefully, we'll take that lesson with us," he said.

Other memorable stories during my short tenure with Huskers Illustrated:

► Seniors Jim Hartung and Steve Elliott led the Husker gymnasts to a fourth consecutive national championship in '82. Coach Francis Allen's dynasty would reach No. 5 the next year, and he would tack on three more before hard times fell after the '94 title. The most recent NCAA finals appearance for the men's team was in 1999. Hartung subsequently went on to win an Olympic gold medal, and he and his South Omaha



THE SHORT-LIVED NEBRASKA: *Inside Cornhusker Sports* was Huskers Illustrated's predecessor. The first 38-page issue, published by LeDuc Enterprises in Mercer Island, Wash., was dated December 1978. Writers included a Nebraska sports information office assistant, Steve Pederson. Twenty-issue subscriptions cost \$19.95. By the 1981 season, the magazine was finished.

book on his coaching career in 1997 after 25 seasons with 255 wins, three national championships and a Hall of Fame seat.

The lasting personal memory of those times is an early-morning bus



HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED, ON THE MASTHEAD

Wayne Bishop, Managing Editor	1981-88
Tom Ash, Editor	1982-84
Mark Owens, Editor	1988-90
Chris Greer, Editor	1992-98
Brian Hill, Editor	1999-08
Aaron Babcock, Editor	2008-present

buddy and Husker teammate, Chuck Chmelka, are Allen's current assistant coaches.

► Jerry Pettibone had been lured to Nebraska from Oklahoma as the football recruiting coordinator in an apparent coup for Osborne. Three weeks before signing day in his third year, he left town without telling Osborne and took the recruiting job at Texas A&M. Osborne had given Pettibone permission to talk to the Aggies with the condition that he talk to Osborne before making a decision. Osborne was not pleased. After three years in College Station, Pettibone was the head coach at Northern Illinois and Oregon State before returning to Oklahoma as an assistant athletic director. He was fired in a budget cut after one year. He is retired in Oregon.

► Another story that year detailed the promotion of Steve Pederson from staff assistant to recruiting coordinator. 'Nuff said.

► Nebraska awarded its first exclusive radio broadcast contract to high bidder KFAB (\$2.7 million over five years), ensuring that Lyell Bremser's "Man, woman and child" would be heard by Husker fans for at least a 45th year. The current contract, signed in 2008 with IMG's Husker Sports Network, is for \$112.5 million over 13 years.

► The Husker volleyball team moved its operations from Mabel Lee Hall, where it shared practice space with pick-up basketball games, a martial arts club and an ROTC drill team, to the Coliseum.

A cerebral former English teacher named Terry Pettit was building a dynasty by winning six consecutive Big Eight trophies.

► The breakthrough on the national scene came in 1982 when the Huskers finally were invited to the NCAA tournament and upset Penn State in the Coliseum. Since then, the Pettit-John Cook program has qualified for 26 consecutive NCAA tournaments, won three national titles and finished runner-up three times.

► Moe Iba's basketball team won a major recruiting victory with the signing of 6-foot-11 center Dave Hoppen of



Omaha Benson. Hoppen would go on to become the all-time leading Nebraska scorer, make the all-Big Eight team three times and land in the Husker Hall of Fame. He led the Huskers to their second NCAA appearance in 1986. Danny Nee took teams to four consecutive NCAAAs to start the '90s, but they haven't been back since.

► Sprinter Merlene Ottey set a world indoor record in the 300 meters on the Devaney Center track. The four-year Big Eight sprint champion



would go on to run in an incredible six Olympics for her native Jamaica and a seventh for Slovenia, where she now lives. With eight Olympic medals and a record 14 in world championships, she barely failed to make the Slovenia team in 2008 at age 48.



► Grand Island banker Jim Beltzer won the Clarence E. Swanson award for service to Husker athletics. It was a family honor. The Husker baseball facility was named for his father, Oren Allen "Buck" Beltzer. Buck Beltzer Field, its antiquated grandstand and the Baumann Baseball Building are now gone, replaced by the glitzy new Hawks Center indoor practice facility on site and the uptown Haymarket Park across Salt Creek.

► Those 1980s issues also reported on another Islander, baseball coach John Sanders, and his frustrations with back-to-back, 44-win seasons and failure to get an NCAA bid. The headline: "Exhausted Pitching Staff Cuffed Around in League Tournament." Current coach Mike Anderson could probably relate, but his latest team didn't make it to the Big 12 Tournament. He has, however, taken a couple to the College World Series as an assistant and another one as head coach. Sanders couldn't do that in 19 seasons.

► The Husker softball team qualified for its first Women's College World Series under coach Nancy Plantz. Since then, Nebraska has made 19 NCAA appearances and six more in the WCWS. In the 13 Big 12 seasons under Rhonda Revelle, the Huskers have won six championships and were runner-up six other times.



My two seasons with Huskers Illustrated also provided poignant stories about:

- Paul Schneider's retirement after 31 years as head trainer.
- Turner Gill's enduring a lengthy recovery from nerve damage



to his leg that sidelined him after the Iowa State game in 1981 and for the following spring.

► Mitch Krenk's overcoming malignant cancer in a toe, which was removed at the Mayo Clinic. The Nebraska City walk-on became a stalwart tight end and lifter of the year as a senior.

FAST FORWARD:

► "Schnitz" Schneider finished out his Husker career helping Jim Ross manage the Devaney Center. He died in 1990. One of his students, Jerry Weber, is in his 13th year as head trainer.

► Gill recovered nicely, led the Huskers to 24 wins in 26 games during my tour, coached 12 years at Nebraska under Osborne, Frank Solich and Bill Callahan, stopped for a year in Green Bay with the Packers before embarking on a remarkable four-year rejuvenation job with a moribund program as Buffalo's head coach.



► Mitch Krenk's son, Nick, finished his career as a walk-on for Doc Sadler's Husker basketball team last season. He made the Academic All-Big 12 first team and recently was hired as the varsity boys' basketball coach at Johnson-Brock High School in Nebraska.

► And Steinkuhler? His legacy as a winner lives on in Memorial Stadium.

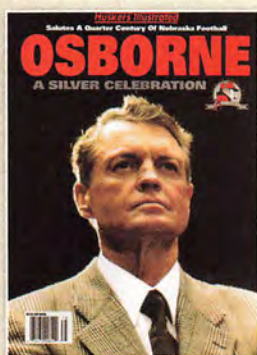
His older son, Ty, wrapped up a stellar career as a Cornhusker defensive tackle last fall. Ty's younger brother Baker, a Parade All-American in high school, continues the family tradition this year as a redshirted freshman defensive lineman.

Through the years, nearly 29 of 'em, Huskers Illustrated has been there, covering it all. 'Way to hang in there, HI! **N**

Humble Beginnings, Proud History

When *Nebraska: Inside Cornhusker Sports* folded, University Sports Publications – ironically enough, located in Tulsa, Okla., at the time – salvaged the situation and *Huskers Illustrated* was born, honoring unexpired subscriptions to its predecessor. Publisher Mike Henry introduced the new magazine in the first issue, dated August 1981: Vol. 1, No. 1.

Prior to what would be Tom Osborne's final season as coach (no one except family



knew his plan to step aside in favor of Frank Solich), *Huskers Illustrated* published a special, 130-page, full-color tribute to his career. *Osborne: A Silver Celebration* quickly

sold out and is now a collector's item.

Contributing editor Mike Babcock, who has covered the Cornhuskers for 31 seasons and written several books about Nebraska football (as well as one about Husker basketball), wrote the Osborne tribute. He has written for *Huskers Illustrated* since its inception, even briefly serving as interim editor, or at least the publication's Lincoln contact, following the departure of Tom Ash.

What follows are excerpts from

Huskers Illustrated stories about significant events and a column in its entirety (page 36) on the passing of Bob Devaney in May of 1997. The excerpts are followed by a year-by-year retrospective of *Huskers Illustrated* covers, beginning with the first.

Publisher's Message

With the debut of *Huskers Illustrated* we begin a new chapter in Nebraska athletics. Certainly, we all realize that we are not the first to try to capture the excitement and color of Cornhusker athletics in a magazine designed specifically for NU fans.

But we feel we are the first to approach the job with the right attitude – an attitude that will enable us to grow and prosper and insure you, our readers, not only a magazine on a regular basis month after month, and year after year...but a publication which will start out better than its predecessor – and then just keep getting better.

There is a special tradition in Nebraska athletics that demands quality, consistency and dedication to being the best. Were those not our goals, we would never have made the initial contacts with Coach Tom Osborne and the athletic officials at the University of Nebraska. And, had they not been convinced of our sincerity and our ability to deliver that quality product, we would not have enjoyed the cooperation and support from them which has made this Inaugural Issue possible.

We understand the skepticism if you have had unfavorable experiences with LeDuc Enterprises. Indeed, we demand that skepticism. It is that challenge to us by you the readers to deliver what we promise that we will keep us on the same level as the Nebraska athletic program — right at the top.

So get to know us. We plan on being around a long, long time.

Yours truly,
Mike Henry, Publisher
(Volume 1, Issue 1, August 1981)



MIKE BABCOCK (LEFT) HAS COVERED THE CORNHUSKERS FOR 31 SEASONS AND HAS WRITTEN FOR HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1981.

A TIME TO REFLECT

Although the unique passion for Cornhusker football preceded him, Bob Devaney introduced the modern era by restoring a winning tradition that had been suspended for the better part of 20 years.

THE RED BRICK house sits on C Street, near Our Saviour's Lutheran Church and the intersection of S. 40th. The neighborhood is one of mature trees and well-tended lawns.

The May morning is peaceful. The sky is blue, accented by wisps of clouds. A small sign in the window of a neighbor's house says: "NU #1."

Three days have passed since Bob Devaney was laid to rest...

Devaney lived in the red brick house on C Street until the last couple of years before his death. After his health began to fail him, he and wife Phyllis moved to Eastmont Towers.

In the early 1960s, the C Street neighborhood was closer to the south and east edges of Lincoln than it is now. The city limits have pushed farther out in both directions over 35 years.

In some ways, the red brick house symbolizes Devaney's remarkable accomplishments during 11 seasons as Nebraska's football coach — his accomplishments as athletic director and good will ambassador for the state were no less remarkable, but we appreciate the latter because of the former.

Tippy Dye was the athletic director who hired Devaney away from Wyoming, a fact lost on many in a new generation of Cornhusker fans, even though had it not been for Dye, events wouldn't have transpired the way they did. Devaney was the right coach, in the right place, at the right time.

Dye made the decision that profoundly changed the course of Nebraska football history. However, buildings aren't named in honor of athletic directors. That Devaney was athletic director when the Sports Center was named for him was coincidence not cause. But I digress...

As with the red brick house on the quiet street in what is becoming a near-south neighborhood, Devaney's coaching accomplishments have been hidden by the passing of time.

Unless you are of that particular generation of Nebraska fans, you have to go looking to find the specifics of Devaney's 11 seasons. You have to turn east off S. 40th Street.

They are overgrown, like the rings inside a giant redwood. They are there, beneath the bark of national championships in 1994 and 1995 and the 24 consecutive seasons of nine or more victories and bowl-game appearances since he stepped aside as coach. But the bark must be stripped.

Devaney used to joke that he had been at Nebraska for several years before he discovered the Cornhuskers had *lost* the 1941 Rose Bowl game. Not only was it Nebraska's first bowl appearance but it also was the football program's most significant, and recent, achievement before he arrived in 1962.

Devaney's death, on May 9, marks the end of an era. He was of another time, when Bear Bryant, Duffy Daugherty, Ara Parseghian and Bud Wilkinson walked college football's sidelines.

Tom Osborne often talks of the importance of the journey rather than the destination. Devaney led the Cornhuskers on their journey to national prominence. In many ways, Osborne has had to deal with the destination throughout his quarter of century as Devaney's hand-picked successor.

Those of us who lived in Devaney's time mourn his death not only because it has taken away a friend, but also because it reminds us we cannot relive years that seem so much happier and simpler than they were.

I hope his close friends and family don't take offense at my using the term "friend" to describe my association with Devaney. I knew him better than some, because of my responsibilities as a sports writer as well as my collaboration with him and others on his 1981 autobiography *Devaney*.

The book was written "By Bob Devaney and Friends." I was a friend by definition, if not in fact. I also called him "Coach" another liberty, considering I never played for him. But I was not alone in either case. He had countless friends whom he never met. And he was "Coach" to the entire state.

A writer (for *Sports Illustrated*, I think) once described Devaney as having the appearance of a "dumpy baker." The characterization fit, though probably not in the way the writer intended.

Devaney was as unpretentious as he was extraordinary. And he wasn't averse to rolling up his sleeves and getting flour all over himself if that's what was needed to get the job done.

In a sense, Devaney came to Nebraska anonymously. He used an assumed name when he visited Lincoln to be interviewed. But over 11 years, he wrote his name across the state in bold red letters. The figurative ink is indelible, as if anyone would have wanted to erase it.

He was just like us, and yet he was not like us at all. He lived all those years in that quiet neighborhood near C and S. 40th streets. You could walk up to his front door and knock. You could shake the Coach's hand. He never had an unlisted telephone number.

The house is still there, a fleeting reminder of what used to be.

Now he resides in our memory, however... and our hearts. **N**

—Mike Babcock, Vol. 17, No. 6
June/July 1997

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FINISHED BUSINESS

IT WAS DONE.

A sign displayed by some of the 20,000-plus Nebraska football fans in the Orange Bowl stadium on New Year's night said: "Unfinished Business."

A line was drawn through the "Un." Nebraska 24, Miami 17.

The Cornhuskers were 13-0. They had achieved a season of perfection. They were national champions.

Tom Osborne said he had never coached a team with such resolve, such determination to complete a task. The 1993 Cornhuskers had come up one game short of perfection, losing to Florida State, 18-16, in the 1994 Orange Bowl game. That night, those who returned committed themselves to getting back to Miami and completing the task.

Their resolve was tested along the way. But they persisted, winning 12 in a row and capturing a fourth consecutive Big Eight title.

That title was their ticket to Miami, where they were matched against the third-ranked, 10-1 Hurricanes.

Miami's only loss was against Washington, 38-20, in the third game of the season at the Orange Bowl Stadium, where the Hurricanes had posted an NCAA-record 58 consecutive victories.

The Hurricanes had recovered from the Washington loss to win eight in a row. Their record in the Orange Bowl Stadium since 1985 was 62-1.

There could be no more difficult task than winning against Miami in the Orange Bowl, particularly since a victory would



give the Hurricanes an outside chance at a fifth national championship in 12 years.

The game matched Miami's defensive speed and pass-oriented offense against Nebraska's restructured defense and option attack. Because of Miami's home-field advantage, the game was nearly even at kickoff.

After Frazier's 6-yard run to the Hurricane 14, Schlesinger got the call again. And again he scored, leaving Miami defenders strewn in his wake. The winning touchdown, as with the one that preceded it, was scored on a trap play. "Miami was flying up the field, and we tried some traps," Osborne said. "The last one was a 'false' block, like pass protection."

Sapp and middle linebacker Ray Lewis were victimized. "We had run that play

during the season, but we hadn't practiced it," said Osborne.

The next day, following the team's return to Lincoln, Schlesinger described the winning touchdown at a celebration at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. "When I scored, I looked at the grass in the end zone, and it was a lot greener than anywhere else on the field," he said.

It was a national championship green Nebraska had last seen in 1970 and 1971. The 1993 Cornhuskers got a glimpse, and that glimpse was where it began. Mission accomplished.

Nebraska was finally a national champion. **N**

Volume 15, Issue 2

February 1995



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*Hotel stay for Friday and Saturday, with the exception of Oklahoma, which requires a three-night stay.

TWO FOR TOM

MICHAEL BOOKER WAS asked to identify the turning point in Nebraska's 62-24 victory against second-ranked Florida in the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl. Booker smiled, which hardly set him apart from anyone else associated with Nebraska on the night of Jan. 2, 1996.

The Cornhuskers' players, coaches and fans were awash in those rare smiles that can only be elicited by winning back-to-back national championships.

"I'd like to think the turning point was my interception," Booker said.

To talk about a turning point in Nebraska's 38-point victory was a little like trying to keep the Cornhusker defense from harassing Florida quarterback Danny Wuerffel. At best, such an outcome might produce a cliché such as:

"The turning point was when Nebraska showed up."

All things considered, however, Booker's interception, one of three by Nebraska, was as much a turning point as anything else. Nebraska had just been forced to "settle" for the first of two Kris Brown field goals after a first-and-goal at the Gators' 7-yard line. The kick had given the Cornhuskers a 25-10 lead late in the first half.

An Eastern newspaper reporter, who was sitting on the roof of the press box at Sun Devil Stadium because of the unprecedented number of requests for media credentials, used a boxing metaphor to describe the contest to that point. Florida, which trailed by 15 points, had taken the Cornhuskers' best punches and refused to go down, the reporter said.

He figured a two-touchdown deficit was insignificant for Florida's "fun-and-gun"



offense. Plus, the Gators still had nearly four minutes remaining before halftime to close the gap.

In passing, the Eastern reporter mentioned that he had predicted a Florida victory.

After completing a pass to Ike Hilliard for a 7-yard gain on first down from his own 23, Wuerffel tried — without success — to hit Hilliard two more times. If Nebraska had not been drawn offside on third down, Florida would have been forced to punt. Instead, the Gators got a first down.

It would have been better for the Gators if they had punted.

Wuerffel, who had thrown only 10 interceptions in 12 games, threw another pass in Hilliard's direction. The pass was "ugly," according to Booker, who was covering Hilliard one-on-one. "They came out there with a game plan to pick on me," said Booker, a junior cornerback from Oceanside, Calif. "Probably 70 percent of

the passes came my way the first half."

During Florida's 12-play, 54-yard touchdown drive in the first quarter, Booker ran stride-for-stride with Hilliard and deflected a Wuerffel pass. His coverage was an example of text-book man-to-man.

But Wuerffel challenged him again late in the second quarter. And again Booker responded, stepping in front of Hilliard to intercept the poorly thrown pass. He then raced 42 yards for the score.

"I came off my man, looking all the way," Booker said.

Brown added the extra-point kick to boost the score to 32-10. A newspaper reporter from Tucson, Ariz., told the Eastern reporter that he had also predicted a Florida victory. *Oops.* **N**

— Mike Babcock, Vol. 16, No. 2
February 1996

A TEARFUL GOOD BYE

THE MASSIVE STAGE, built in the west stands of Memorial Stadium, was being dismantled on the Friday before spring football practice at Nebraska would conclude with the annual intrasquad game.

The stage was to be used for the “Night of Champions” celebration that evening.

Nearly 37,000 tickets had been sold for the event, which had been planned to honor, among other things, the Cornhuskers’ 1995 national championship football and volleyball teams.

On the day of the event, however, the stage was taken down, the celebration canceled.

With the activity on the stage as a backdrop, a television reporter interviewed Nebraska football player Mike Minter in the west corner of the south end zone in the late morning on Friday.

The reporter balanced a camera on his shoulder and held out a microphone for Minter.

The two figures were dwarfed by the vast expanse of the stadium.

With the brief interview concluded, Minter started to walk toward the tunnel that leads to the varsity locker room beneath the South Stadium. He took five steps, before stopping to shake the hand of a familiar visitor who was standing quietly in the shadow of the stands. The handshake became a hug.

The usually up-beat Minter was somber. “I didn’t believe it yesterday,” he said.

“It” was the sad news that Brook Berringer, Minter’s Cornhusker teammate of three seasons, had died in a small plane crash the previous afternoon. Berringer was piloting the plane, which went down just after taking off from a field near



Raymond, Neb. Tobey Lake, the brother of Berringer’s girlfriend, also died in the crash. “When I heard about it on the radio this morning, I broke down,” said Minter.

That was a common response among coaches, teammates and fans, as well as anyone else who knew or felt as if they knew Berringer, the charismatic young man from Goodland, Kan.

Two small, red roses had been taped to the doors at the west entrance of the Hewitt Center, along with a note that said, “In Remembrance of Brook ... Love, your fans.”

Two other roses — one red, one white — were leaning against a door.

Berringer’s death, at age 22, left the Cornhusker community paralyzed with the sorrow and caused Athletic Director Bill Byrne to cancel the “Night of Champions” celebration. Refunds were offered to the 36,827 who purchased the

\$3 tickets in advance. Hardly anyone requested refunds.

In fact, some asked if they could purchase tickets after the event was canceled as a way of contributing to a memorial fund for Berringer. Money not refunded was to be used for that purpose.

The country band Sawyer Brown was scheduled to perform at the celebration. Berringer was a friend of the band, which had made plans to allow him to join in on a song or two.

Even though Berringer started only seven games during his career at Nebraska, and played sparingly as Tommie Frazier’s backup last season, he achieved the celebrity status of an All-American and elicited a special affection from people who had never met or even come in contact with him. **N**

— Vol. 16, No. 6
June/July 1996

A LEGEND LEAVES

RUMORS OF Tom Osborne's retirement were rampant on the Monday after the Big 12 playoff.

They spread to the point that the Dec. 4 edition of the *Omaha World-Herald* included a short story on the sports page under the headline: "Osborne: No Truth To Rumor That He's About to Quit."

The subject was raised the next day during a pre-Orange Bowl teleconference.

Osborne said he had fielded numerous phone calls regarding the rumors at home the previous night, and "I'll probably be waiting by the phone again tonight," he said. "Usually, I go to bed about 11 (p.m.), so I'd appreciate it if you call me before 11. Any rumors, attack 'em now rather than tonight."

There was speculation at the beginning of this season, his 25th as head coach, about when the 60-year-old Osborne might retire. Speculation resurfaced on Nov. 1, after he coached his 250th victory against Oklahoma and gained momentum after he underwent tests for an irregular heartbeat the night after the Cornhuskers' final home game against Iowa State (Dec. 6 issue, "Around The Horn").

Osborne has resumed his regular workouts, and the problem is under control.

"It's something people can live with," he said at the news conference. "But it can cause strokes. It can cause heart attacks. It's not a good condition to have, and it probably will come back. It's something that once you have it, the odds are, you'll have it again. They have to get it back in sync.



"I'm doing OK at the present time. I've had some warning signals; there's no question about it.

"But I'm here today, and that's the main thing."

Just over 24 hours later, Osborne addressed a packed South Stadium lounge, announcing his decision to step down as coach.

"I tried yesterday, do kind of a soft-shoe with you, a little bit, in preparing you. But I was not able to tell you what was on my mind because I had not yet talked to the players.

"I hadn't talked to the coaches. And that's got to come first."

The decision to step down wasn't spur of the moment. "This has been in the process over the last few months. There have been a few things that have happened this fall in terms of stamina, in terms of my cardiac

problems...cardiovascular problems," Osborne said.

"And I don't want to overplay those. It isn't like I can't go out and do most everything I've always done. But probably at some point in the next year, two years, whatever, I might have to call a halt to seven-days-a-week and all that goes with it. So I think it's probably wise to back off before you leave feet first and somebody tells you you've got to go. That's kind of why I'm stepping down right now."

Osborne, who underwent double bypass heart surgery in 1985, said the episode the night of the Iowa State game reflected a problem unrelated to the arterial blockage that led to surgery.

"Naturally, I've been concerned about what was going on with those arteries," he said. ■

—Mike Babcock, Vol. 18, No. 1
January 1998

A CALL FOR PIECE (OF THE TITLE)

SCOTT FROST made an impassioned plea directed at the coaches who voted in the USA Today/ESPN poll following Nebraska's 42-17 victory against Tennessee in the Orange Bowl game. The sounds of "Osborne, Osborne, Osborne" filled the night.

If Frost's words were harsh from a Michigan perspective, so be it. Someone had to speak on Nebraska's behalf. The Associated Press national championship had been conceded to the Wolverines, following their 21-16 victory against Washington State in the Rose Bowl game the previous afternoon.

The national media had established the dictum that No. 1 in the rankings depended on performance during the season. But at bowl time, winning was all that mattered.

Never had a No. 1-ranked team that won its bowl game ever been dropped from the top spot, as if that were all anyone really needed to know. Despite accepting that tradition, however, many of the same people applauded the selection of Michigan's Charles Woodson as the Heisman Trophy winner.

No predominantly defensive player had ever been voted the Heisman. Was that reason not to vote for Woodson, a defensive back who also returned kicks and played receiver? Of course not.

Just because something has always been a certain way doesn't make it right.

It was that point Frost tried to make, using Nebraska's victory against Tennessee.

"I don't think people change their

votes because of what somebody says, much," Tom Osborne said during a news conference at the West Resort-Miami Beach the next day.

"That's why I've never gotten into that lobbying much. I do vote, and I don't pay a whole lot of attention to what somebody says. But I appreciate the fact that Scott

It sat to Osborne's right at the post-Orange Bowl news conference.

Osborne hadn't listened to what Frost said the previous night. It was all but impossible in the celebration that followed the decisive victory in his final game as head coach.

"I didn't hear the speech," he said. "I just heard about it."

Frost summarized it during the post-game interviews.

"Here is what I said: 'This is my 30 seconds of fame, so all you guys get this on camera.' The AP has pretty much given it (the national championship) away. It's up to the coaches," Frost said. "I'm so proud of this team and Coach Osborne. I don't want to see him go out without a championship.

"I basically have two points for the coaches. One, if you can look yourself in the mirror and say if your job depended on playing either Michigan or Nebraska, who would you rather play?"

"The second point I have is: I can't see how any coach outside the Big Ten or Pac-10 would

vote for Michigan because if somebody from North Carolina, Florida State, West Virginia, wherever it might be, Notre Dame, coaches from there ... if they were undefeated and won the Alliance Bowl game, they would expect to share the national title. It's been split before. It's OK to split it. It should be split." **N**

— Mike Babcock, Vol. 18, No. 2

February 1998



felt as strongly as he did."

Whether any coaches were persuaded by Frost's speech to change their vote is doubtful. Nebraska's performance against No. 3-ranked Tennessee, however, was another matter.

The trophy — a crystal football atop a black base — sponsored by Sears and presented to the national champion as determined by the USA Today/ESPN poll was irrefutable evidence of that.

HE'S BACK

WELL, YES, TOM OSBORNE is back where he belongs, sort of.

But no, he is not going to be coaching football. If he were to consider returning to the sideline, "Nancy would get a gun and shoot me," he said, referring to his wife.

She will be making a sacrifice as it is, anyway.

Had his answer been no, "life would be a lot easier," he said.

Nebraska chancellor Harvey Perlman asked the question, a day after firing Steve Pederson as athletic director: Would the Hall of Fame coach serve as interim athletic director?

The answer was yes. "I care about this program," said Osborne.

So 10 years after stepping aside from coaching, in favor of hand-picked successor Frank Solich, Osborne came home. It seemed like old times at the news conference to introduce him.

The lobby of the university's Van Brunt Visitor's Center was jammed with reporters, with athletic department personnel and curious students, and even a few with no direct connection to the proceedings who had come to share in the drama. A bank of cameras captured the proceedings, preserving them in time. Late-afternoon sunlight streamed through the windows to Osborne's left, it's warmth symbolic.

It seemed like old times when Osborne strode into the room, accompanied by Perlman. He acknowledged familiar faces and spoke from notes scribbled on a sheet of paper, folded once over.

Actually, he didn't refer to the notes.



They were more a prop, a coach's scripted plays. Osborne was comfortable in the surroundings, and more importantly, with his new responsibility.

Three terms in congress, a run for governor and 36 years in coaching, including the first 11 as Bob Devaney's assistant, have prepared him well for this time. "I'm not nervous at all," he said. "I've stood there on fourth-and-1 and had everybody screaming at me. So this is no problem."

The process moved quickly. It was a no-brainer for Perlman, assuming Osborne would agree. And how could he not? These are tough times. Nebraska needed him, football in particular.

The football program is in "disarray, a little bit," Perlman said.

Even so, "I will certainly serve all sports equally," said Osborne. "Sometimes there's a little bit of anxiety when a football guy or basketball person is in a position like this.

'Well, you're only going to pay attention to one sport.' That will not be an issue with me. I will pay attention to everybody.

"Naturally, football is a big situation we have right now because of the financial restraints."

The athletic department operates in the black because of Big Red football.

Osborne's appointment is open-ended. There is no timeline for a permanent replacement. But the term "interim" preceding his title should not be misconstrued. "He still has the full authority and responsibility of the athletic director," Perlman said.

"I'm counting on him to do what needs to be done, as he believes it needs to be done to move our program forward and make progress here." **N**

—Mike Babcock, Vol. 27, No. 15
October 27, 2007



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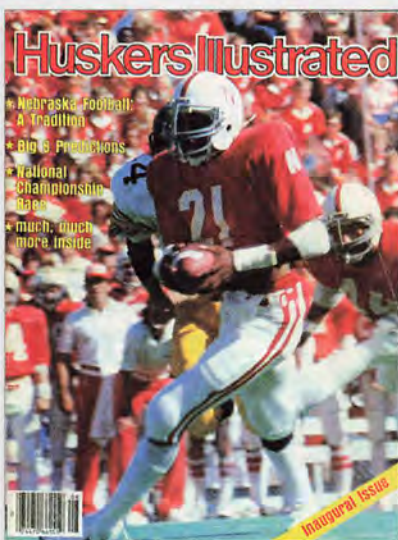
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1981

The season was Tom Osborne's ninth as head coach. The first cover featured junior I-back Roger Craig, who rushed for 1,060 yards and six touchdowns, sharing time with sophomore junior college transfer Mike Rozier. Both earned first-team all-conference recognition. Craig, the first player in the NFL with 1,000 yards rushing and 1,000 yards receiving in the same season, caught only 16 passes during his Cornhusker career.



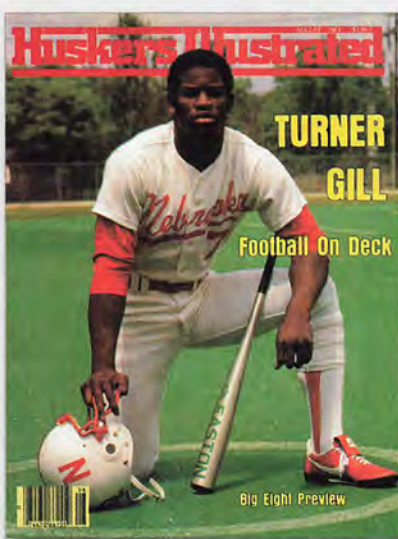
1982

Though not yet Internet-driven, recruiting was still a passion. The recruiting issue's cover photo was taken at a banquet celebrating Nebraska's first out-right Big Eight championship under Tom Osborne in 1981. Pictured from left, with the trophy, are Johnny Rodgers, Osborne, Rich Glover and recruits Bob Bowen and Kevin Biggers. Rodgers and Glover played on the Cornhuskers' last out-right Big Eight title team in 1972.



1983

Turner Gill was a second-round pick of the White Sox in the Major League draft following his senior year in high school. He was an 18th-round pick of the Yankees in the spring of 1983, after playing one season for the Nebraska baseball team. But he returned to direct the "Scoring Explosion" offense in the fall. After three seasons in the CFL, he played three minor league seasons.



1984

Nebraska set an NCAA record by playing in 35 consecutive bowl games. So HI's first issue each year was a bowl preview and the second was a bowl recap. This cover featured Heisman Trophy winner Mike Rozier and Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award winner Dean Steinkuhler, poolside at the team hotel in Miami, prior to the 1984 Orange Bowl game – the dramatic 31-30 loss against Miami.



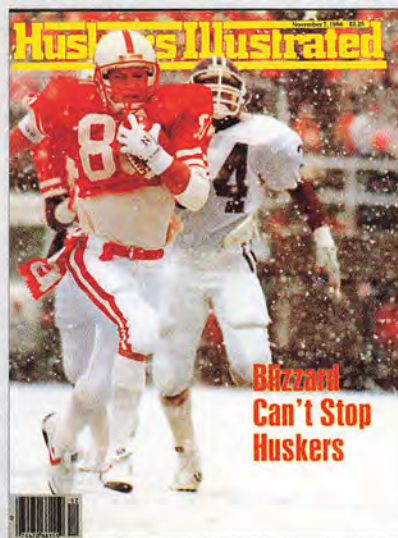
1985

Tom Osborne, not yet 50 years old, underwent heart bypass surgery in February, as national letter-of-intent-signing day approached. He was concerned his health issue would have a negative impact on recruiting. It did not. The Cornhusker class included Steve Taylor, Broderick Thomas and LeRoy Etienne as well as less-publicized future star Ken Clark. Oh yes, Marvin Sanders was in the class, too.



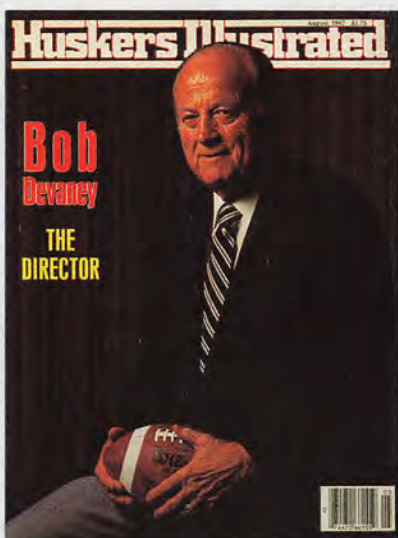
1986

Those who attended the Kansas State game in 1986 might not remember the final score (38-0). But they almost certainly remember the halftime entertainment, groundskeeper Bill Shepard on his tractor, clearing the Memorial Stadium turf of snow. This cover, from that game, features Rod Smith returning a punt 60 yards to the Wildcats' 4-yard line. Smith led the nation in punt returns that season.



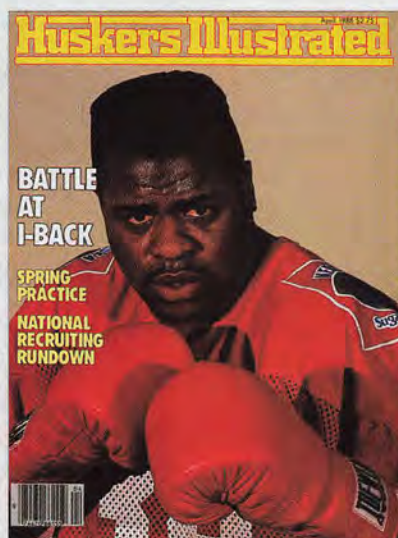
1987

Bob Devaney was in his 20th year as athletic director, a responsibility he held until Jan. 4, 1993, when Bill Byrne officially became his successor. Devaney, whose coaching record at Nebraska was 101-20-2 with back-to-back national titles (1970-71), was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1981, the same year HI made its debut. The "Sandman," Broderick Thomas (No. 89 below) was a junior All-American.



1988

No, senior Tyreese Knox wasn't boxing. Rather, he was competing with junior Ken Clark and sophomore Terry Rodgers for the starting job at I-back following the departure of Keith Jones, a two-time, first-team All-Big Eight selection. Clark emerged, rushing for 1,497 yards and 12 touchdowns. As a result, he was featured on the cover of the Cornhuskers' 1989 media guide, under the headline: "Heisman Trophy Candidate Ken Clark."



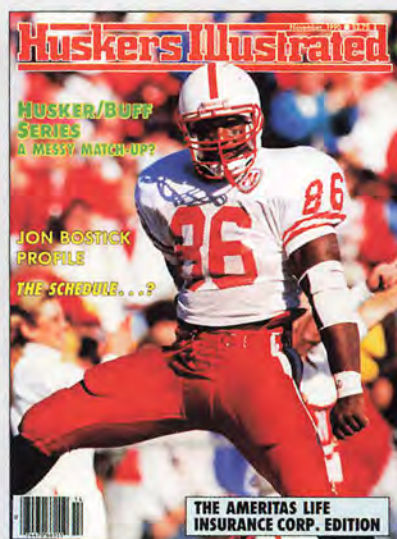
1989

Tom Osborne and Oklahoma's Barry Switzer both became head coaches in 1973. Switzer had the advantage head-to-head, winning 12-of-17 games with talent-laden teams. Nebraska won the final game against Oklahoma under Switzer in 1988, however, and Osborne would lose only one Oklahoma game post-Switzer, finishing with a 13-13 career record against the Sooners.



1990

Johnny Mitchell (No. 86) didn't qualify out of high school in Chicago under the NCAA's Proposition 48 guidelines, so he enrolled as a part-time student at Nebraska for the fall semester of 1989 (along with Derek Brown) to preserve four seasons of eligibility. The athletic tight end used only two of those seasons, however, before leaving by way of the NFL draft – first round, New York Jets.



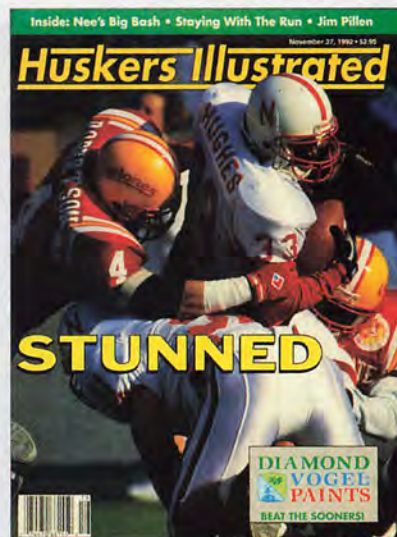
1991

Redshirted freshman Calvin Jones (No. 44 below) wasn't the starting I-back in 1991. Sophomore Derek Brown was, and with good reason. He rushed for 1,313 yards and 14 touchdowns. But Jones also scored 14 touchdowns, including a school and Big Eight record six against Kansas. A year later, Jones and Brown were nicknamed the "we-backs," with both rushing for more than 1,000 yards and earning first-team all-conference honors.



1992

Tom Osborne never looked past an opponent and never allowed his players to do so. His consistency and preparation were reflected in the fact that only once in 25 seasons did an Osborne-coached team lose to a team that finished with a losing record. The No. 7-ranked Cornhuskers, directed by freshman quarterback Tommie Frazier, lost at Iowa State 19-10. Coach Jim Walden's Cyclones finished with a 4-7 record.



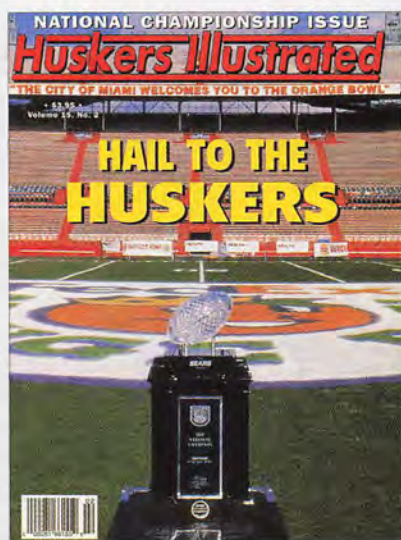
1993

The Cornhuskers won a third consecutive Big Eight championship in 1993, and nearly a national championship. But Byron Bennett's 45-yard field goal attempt on the final play of the Orange Bowl game against Florida State went wide left, leaving the score 18-16 in the Seminoles' favor. Nebraska eked out a pair of one-point victories during the season, at UCLA (14-13) and at Kansas (21-20).



1995

Tom Osborne's first national championship trophy graced the cover of Huskers Illustrated's second issue in 1995. The pre-spring issue (first below) focused on the quarter-back competition between Brook Berringer and Tommie Frazier, while the post-spring issue (second below) featured Darin Erstad, who had kicked for the football team in 1994 but was preparing for the Major League draft. He was the first player picked – and he signed.



1994

The theme for 1994 was finishing the business begun in 1993, winning a national championship. That goal was reflected on the cover of the HI yearbook, though the magazine's pre-season favorite was Florida, followed by Notre Dame (and then Nebraska). Among many who played roles in the title run were (bottom covers, from left): Tommie Frazier, Brook Berringer, Lawrence Phillips and Ed Stewart, an All-America linebacker and co-captain.



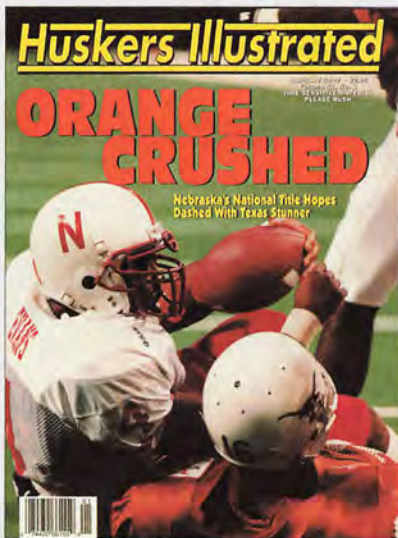
1996

After 26 consecutive victories and two national championships, the No. 1-ranked Cornhuskers finally lost, 19-0 at Arizona State in the second game of the 1996 season. They would climb back to No. 3, before a 37-27 loss against Texas in the first Big 12 championship game ended hopes of an unprecedented three titles in a row. A year later, Tom Osborne would get his third.



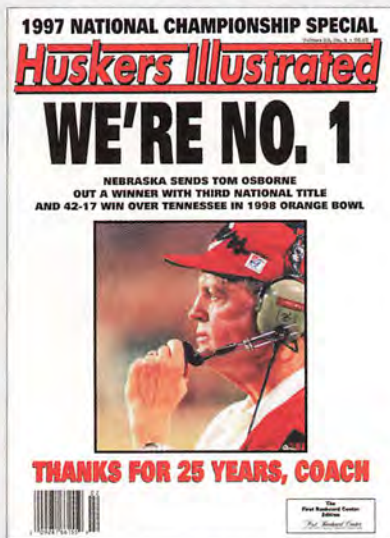
1997

Texas ended hopes of a third consecutive national championship in the Big 12 title game. The hang-over was reflected in attendance for an Orange Bowl victory against Virginia Tech. The crowd of 51,212 was the game's smallest since Jan. 1, 1947. Nebraska sold half its 15,000-ticket allotment. Disinterest was short-lived, however, with another national title run in 1997, including dramatic victories at Missouri (third below) and Colorado (fourth below).



1998

The year's first issue featured Tom Osborne's announcement he would be stepping aside following the Orange Bowl and Frank Solich would be replacing him. The second issue (pictured) reviewed the 42-17 victory against Tennessee and Peyton Manning to earn the coaches' national championship. It also included a profile of Solich, whose first team battled injuries to finish 9-4, defeating Oklahoma State at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City (third below).



1999

Two weeks after Frank Solich went to Millard North High School to talk Eric Crouch into returning, the sophomore quarterback rushed for a touchdown, passed for a touchdown and caught a touchdown pass from Bobby Newcombe, the starter at the time, all in the second quarter of a 45-0 victory against California. At season's end, with Crouch starting at quarterback, Nebraska was arguably the best in the nation.



2000

Eric Crouch's 7-yard touchdown run gave Nebraska a 27-24 overtime victory at Notre Dame (pictured), and Josh Brown's 29-yard field goal as time elapsed produced a 34-32 victory against Colorado (fourth below). The Cornhuskers were No. 1 in the AP poll all but one week until late October, when they lost at eventual national champ Oklahoma. Two weeks later, they lost at Kansas State (third below).



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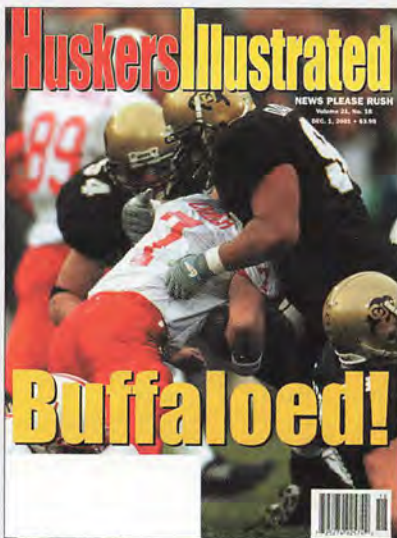
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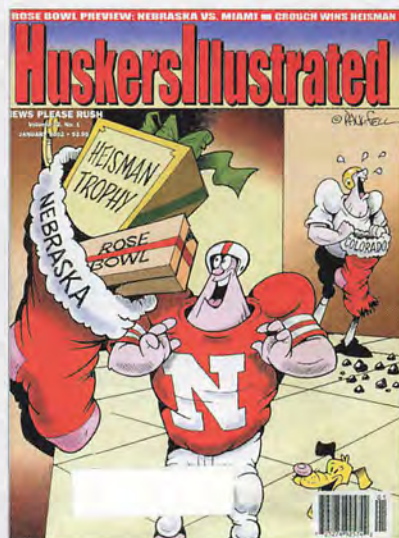
2001

The date was Nov. 23, 2001. The place was Folsom Field, in Boulder, Colo. Cornhusker fans needn't be reminded, but a Golden Age of Cornhusker football came to an unceremonious end that day. Nebraska went into the game against Colorado ranked No. 2, with national title aspirations. The Cornhuskers lost 62-36. Just a month earlier, they had upset then-No. 2 Oklahoma 20-10 (second below).



2002

Despite a 62-36 loss at Colorado, which knocked them out of the Big 12 championship game, the Cornhuskers, led by Heisman Trophy winner Eric Crouch, made the school's second trip to the Rose Bowl to play top-ranked Miami for the BCS national title. The chance for redemption ended in a 37-14 loss (first below), foreshadowing struggles in 2002, beginning with a 40-7 loss at Penn State (second below).



2003

Steve Pederson replaced Bill Byrne as athletic director (second below) then fired Frank Solich following the final regular-season game at Colorado, a 31-22 victory. Solich had restructured his staff prior to the season (first below), bringing in, among others, Bo Pelini (third below), who served as interim coach for an Alamo Bowl victory against Michigan State to give the team at 10-3 record.



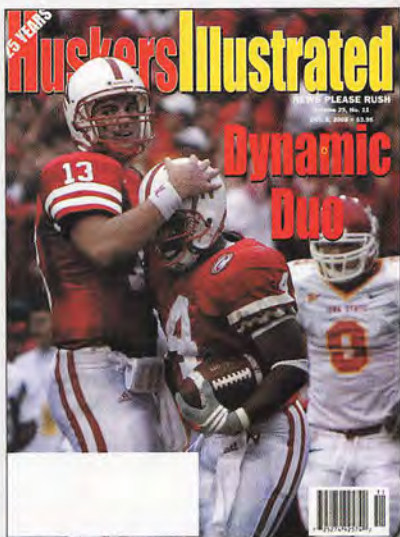
2004

Bill Callahan needed a job after two seasons with the Oakland Raiders. Steve Pederson needed a head coach after firing Frank Solich. Despite a 21-17 loss against Southern Mississippi in the second game and a 70-10 loss at Texas Tech three weeks later, the Cornhuskers were first in the Big 12 North following a 24-3 victory against Missouri, before losing their final three games.



2005

With Zac Taylor at quarterback and Cory Ross carrying the load at I-back (receiving as well as rushing) in the West Coast offense, the Cornhuskers opened Bill Callahan's second season with four consecutive victories, the fourth 27-20 in two overtimes against Iowa State, then won their final two regular-season games – the last 30-3 at Colorado (fourth below) – to earn an invitation to the Alamo Bowl.



2006

The Cornhuskers won the Big 12 North, finished the regular season with a 9-3 record and No. 19 AP ranking, and advanced to the Big 12 championship game. Zac Taylor was the conference offensive player of the year, Adam Carriker the defensive lineman of the year. Maurice Purify caught a Taylor touchdown pass and Jordan Congdon kicked the extra point for a 28-27 victory at Texas A&M (fourth below).



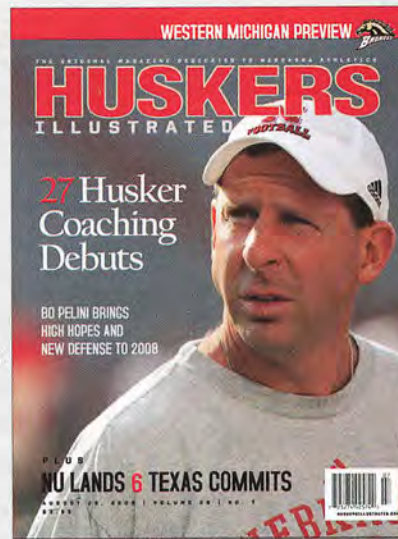
2007

The Bill Callahan era ended. Sam Keller emerged as the No. 1 quarterback in competition with Joe Ganz, whose opportunity came when Keller was sidelined late in a loss at Texas. A 41-40 victory against Ball State (second below) indicated the problems to come. A 45-14 Homecoming loss against Oklahoma State left fans invoking a higher power. Their prayers were answered when Tom Osborne returned as athletic director.



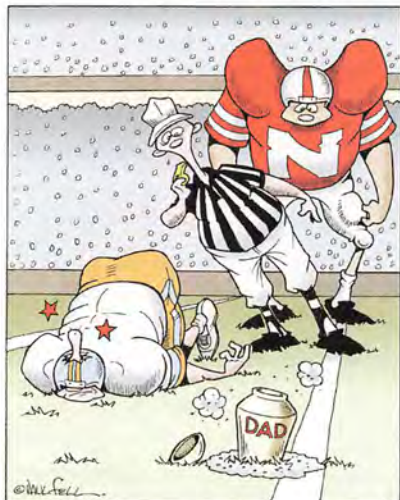
2008

Nebraska got a new head coach in Bo Pelini. Huskers Illustrated got a new editor, with Aaron Babcock succeeding Brian Hill, as well as a new look, beginning with the yearbook (first below). Alex Henery's school-record 57-yard field goal with 1:43 remaining against Colorado (fourth below) helped boost the Cornhuskers into a share of the Big 12 North title and a Gator Bowl bid.

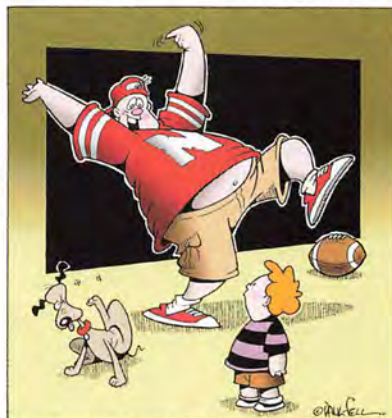


PAUL FELL has been providing illustrations for Huskers Illustrated for nearly a decade, providing “The Paul Fell Prediction” as well as the popular “HuskerNutz.” Each issue Fell provides a funny look at the faithful fans of Husker Nation, chronicling the behavior that most folks would find rather odd, but “HuskerNutz” consider normal.

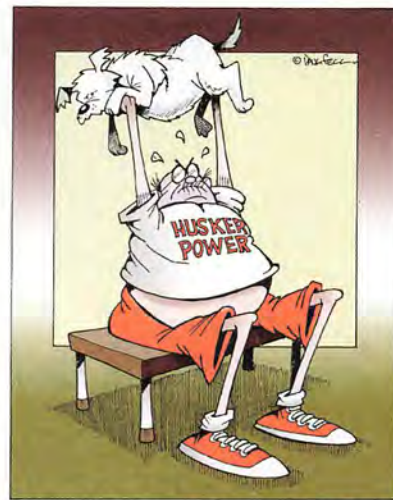
HI has selected 18 of its favorite cartoons that have appeared within Huskers Illustrated over the recent years. Huskers Illustrated solicits suggestions for readers for “HuskerNutz” cartoons. If Fell uses a reader’s suggestion, the contributor gets credit for the idea, as well as an autographed color print of the inspired cartoon.



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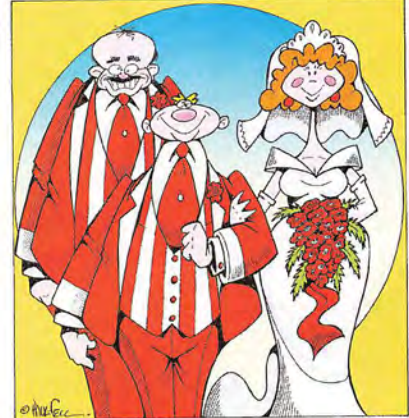
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DOCTORS NOTICE AN UNUSUAL NUMBER OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE COMPLAINTS RIGHT AFTER THE HUSKERS WIN A CLOSE GAME.



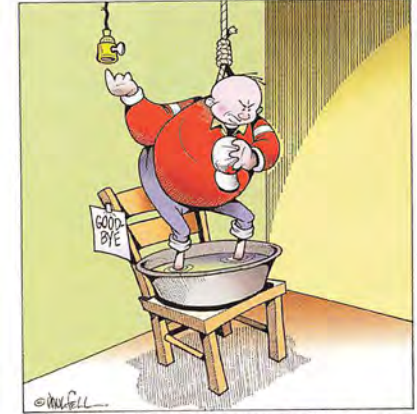
YOU ARE INSULTED WHEN YOU OFFER YOUR GAME TICKETS TO SOMEONE AND HE WANTS TO KNOW WHERE YOUR SEATS ARE LOCATED BEFORE HE ACCEPTS.



YOU CAN REMEMBER WHEN YOU SHOOK HANDS WITH THE LEGENDARY BOB DEVANEY.



HUSKERNUTZ LIVE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF ANXIOUS ANTICIPATION.



HUSKERNUTS TAKE THOSE RARE LOSSES A LOT HARDER THAN THE AVERAGE FAN DOES.



2nd PROJECTED FINISH

Nebraska Cornhuskers

Bo Pelini already is in select company. Only two other first-year Big 12 Conference football coaches directed teams to nine victories, both of them in 1998.

Texas went 9-3 under Mack Brown.

And Nebraska went 9-4 under Frank Solich.

From a fan-acceptance standpoint, though, Solich had a more difficult task, succeeding coach Tom Osborne, who, of course, had decided to step aside after directing the Cornhuskers to a third national championship in the final four seasons of a Hall-of-Fame career.

Brown replaced John Makovic, whose Longhorns were 4-7 in 1997.

From a practical standpoint, Brown might have had a more difficult task, inheriting less talent, though the recruiting potential in Texas undercuts such an assertion.

Even so, Pelini's nine-win first season was more akin to Brown's than to Solich's, considering he took the remainder of a team that

finished 5-7 under Bill Callahan in 2007 and produced not only nine victories but also a share of the Big 12 North Division title — thanks to a Kansas victory over arch-rival Missouri in the final game of the regular season.

Because the Tigers won in Lincoln, they played for the conference championship.

In any case, though such a comparison is more curiosity than meaningful, it does underscore Pelini's accomplishment, and an extension of the comparison helps to illustrate the task he faces in his second season as head coach: What does he do to follow up?

Solich improved on his first season. Nebraska went 12-1, avenged its only loss (to Brown and Texas) in the Big 12 championship game and defeated Tennessee 31-21 in the Fiesta Bowl. The Cornhuskers might have been the best in the nation at season's end.



ROY HELU, JR.

STRENGTHS

The defense has a solid front for its foundation, thanks to the return of **NDAMUKONG SUH**,



his decision, and Barry Turner, who is coming off a season missed because of injury. The

secondary has a good mix of youth

and experience. The running game should continue to develop and take pressure off new quarterback Zac Lee. The line is solid, and the tandem of Roy Helu, Jr., and Quentin Castille could be as good as there is in the Big 12. There is depth at tight end, beginning with junior Mike McNeill.

QUESTION MARKS

Defensively, the linebackers are inexperienced, and there is concern about junior Blake Lawrence, who suffered a third concussion in 12 months late in the spring. Wide receivers

will have to step up to fill a void left by the departure of Nate Swift and Todd Peterson, who caught 125 passes for 1,727 yards and 14 touchdowns between them. Their chemistry with departed quarterback Joe Ganz also will be difficult to replicate.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

The bad news is, the Cornhuskers have to play their main competition for the North Division title, in particular Kansas, on the road. The good news is, the Jayhawks have a tougher interdivisional schedule, so Nebraska could conceivably lose at Lawrence on Nov. 14 and still win the division. However, an interdivisional road game at Baylor won't be a gimme and Oklahoma figures to be about as tough in Lincoln as in Norman. Oh yes, the Cornhuskers also have to go to Virginia Tech in the third week, with a still-new quarterback.

Bob Devaney set the standard for first- and second-year coaches in the modern era at Nebraska. His first team in 1962 went 9-2, including the school's first bowl victory, and his second team went 10-1 and won the first conference title since 1940.

Because the Cornhuskers had been 3-6-1 in 1961 and had enjoyed only one winning record in the nine seasons preceding his arrival, Devaney had what Osborne called a "grace period," something that he, and Solich after him, didn't have.

Fan expectations were considerably different for them.

Pelini's situation in his first season might be somewhere in between what Osborne and Solich faced compared to what Devaney faced, but in his



second season it's closer to the former than the latter because of last season's success. Nine victories are now expected.

And Pelini has encouraged such expectations.

Of his defense, he said, "There are some things we need to fix, and we know how to do it. We've got the right guys to do it. I have high expectations.

"They're extremely high. We made a jump last year from what they were before, but we're nowhere near where I want us to play defensively, and I expect to get there this year."



ZAC LEE

Getting there depends on "discipline and focus, the things necessary to play great defense, play after play, and to have that kind of culture where you're competing down after down, and to be honest with you, where the players' expectations match ours," said Pelini.

"Until we're at the top, we're not satisfied. And we're not there yet."

Though he was talking specifically about the defense, an area in seeming disarray when he arrived from LSU, his words were applicable to the team in general.

By all indications, he embraces the challenge of improving on last season. **N**

"We made some progress through the spring, but we have a long way to go. We have a lot of young guys that need to grow up and mature and develop. That's where you expect to be after spring. There are some good things, but I know that as a football team, we've got a long way to go."

Coach Bo Pelini *on where his team stood going into summer workouts*

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Florida Atlantic
Sept. 12	Arkansas State
Sept. 19	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 26	Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 8	at Missouri
Oct. 17	Texas Tech
Oct. 24	Iowa State
Oct. 31	at Baylor
Nov. 7	Oklahoma
Nov. 14	at Kansas
Nov. 21	Kansas State
Nov. 27	at Colorado

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	Western Michigan	W, 47-24
Sept. 6	San Jose State	W, 35-12
Sept. 13	New Mexico State	W, 38-7
Sept. 27	Virginia Tech	L, 35-30
Oct. 4	Missouri	L, 52-17
Oct. 11	at Texas Tech	L, 37-31 (OT)
Oct. 18	at Iowa State	W, 35-7
Oct. 25	Baylor	W, 32-20
Nov. 1	at Oklahoma	L, 62-28
Nov. 8	Kansas	W, 45-35
Nov. 15	at Kansas State	W, 56-28
Nov. 28	Colorado	W, 40-31
Jan. 1	vs. Clemson*	W, 26-21

*Gator Bowl at Jacksonville, Fla.

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	12-1
2000	10-2
2001	11-2
2002	7-7
2003	10-3
2004	5-6
2005	8-4
2006	9-5
2007	5-7
2008	9-4

AT THE HELM

Bo Pelini, 2nd year
10-4 (.714) all at Nebraska*

Pelini's plan to restore Nebraska's tradition requires restoring the Blackshirt tradition and defensive swagger, a process that continues. Cornhusker fans seemed to be united in the belief he was the man for the job, and that belief has been justified.

*Includes one victory as interim head coach



KEY RETURNEES

Ndamukong Suh, DT

Big Suh's decision to return for his senior season was, well, big. He was the first defensive lineman to lead the Cornhuskers in tackles since 1973, and he scored three touchdowns. What else needs to be said?

Jacob Hickman, OL

A two-year starter and the smartest of the linemen, he also could play guard.

Roy Helu, Jr., IB

The team's leading rusher, Helu carried 70 times for 510 yards and five touchdowns in the final four regular-season games. He's 1A and Quentin Castille is 1B.

KEY LOSSES

Joe Ganz, QB

He had only one season and three games of another to show what he could do. And what he showed was he probably should have been starting sooner.

Nate Swift, WR

Swift broke Johnny Rodgers' career record for pass receptions.

Zach Potter, DE

The two-year starter was second to Ndamukong Suh in tackles for loss (16) and sacks (5.5).

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Zac Lee, QB

Obviously, Nebraska's success will depend on Lee's ability to direct – or more accurately "use" – Shawn Watson's offense to his advantage.

HI'S 2009 PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

Bo Pelini didn't release a depth chart before spring practice. And he didn't release one after the spring game. But Huskers Illustrated takes an intrepid stab at a pre-season depth chart, anyway.

Keep in mind that situations can change as competition for positions will continue until the Cornhuskers begin game-planning for the opening game against Florida Atlantic. One or two players who arrive in the fall could break into the two-deeps as well. And even though a player isn't listed here, that doesn't mean he's out of the picture. That's why it's called a "projected" depth chart.

OFFENSE

WR

18 MENELIK HOLT 6-4 220 SR.
1 Chris Brooks 6-2 215 Sr.

WR

24 NILES PAUL 6-1 215 JR.
11 Curenski Gilleylen 6-0 220 So.

WR

2 ANTONIO BELL 6-2 180 FR.
32 Marcus Mendoza 5-10 185 So.

LT

65 MIKE SMITH 6-6 290 JR.
73 D.J. Jones 6-5 315 Jr.

LG

68 KEITH WILLIAMS 6-5 320 JR.
62 Andy Christensen 6-3 310 Sr.

C

58 MIKE CAPUTO 6-1 275 SO.
67 Jacob Hickman 6-4 295 Sr.

RG

67 JACOB HICKMAN 6-4 295 SR.
74 Ricky Henry 6-4 300 Jr.

RT

78 MARCEL JONES 6-7 310 SO.
63 Derek Meyer 6-5 315 Sr.

TE

44 MIKE MCNEILL 6-4 240 JR.
49 Dreu Young 6-4 245 Jr.

QB

3 ZAC LEE 6-2 210 JR.
17 Cody Green 6-4 215 Fr.

IB

10 ROY HELU 6-0 215 JR.
19 Quentin Castille 6-1 235 Jr.

PK

90 ALEX HENERY 6-2 175 JR.
20 Adi Kunalic 6-0 190 Jr.

KR

2 ANTONIO BELL 6-2 180 FR.
24 Niles Paul 6-1 215 Jr.

DEFENSE

DE

95 PIERRE ALLEN 6-5 265 JR.
17 Josh Williams 6-4 245 RFr.

NT

93 NDAMUKONG SUH 6-4 300 SR.
90 Terrence Moore 6-3 285 So.

DT

94 JARED CRICK 6-6 285 SO.
55 Baker Steinkuhler 6-6 295 RFr.

DE

99 BARRY TURNER 6-3 265 SR.
96 Cameron Meredith 6-4 260 RFr.

LB

40 BLAKE LAWRENCE 6-3 220 JR.
36 Mathew May 6-1 210 So.

LB

54 COLTON KOEHLER 6-1 230 SR.
51 Will Compton 6-2 220 RFr.

LB

42 SEAN FISHER 6-6 230 RFR.
44 Micah Kreikemeier 6-3 215 RFr.

CB

5 ANTHONY WEST 6-0 205 JR.
23 Lance Thorell 6-1 195 So.

CB

21 PRINCE AMUKAMARA 6-1 200 JR.
15 Alfonzo Dennard 5-10 190 So.

S

4 LARRY ASANTE 6-1 215 SR.
28 Eric Hagg 6-2 205 Jr.

S

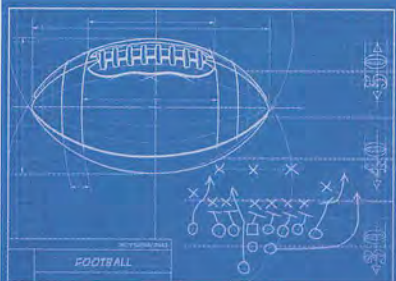
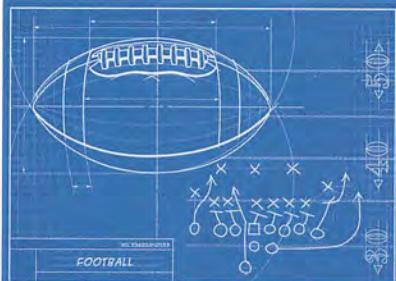
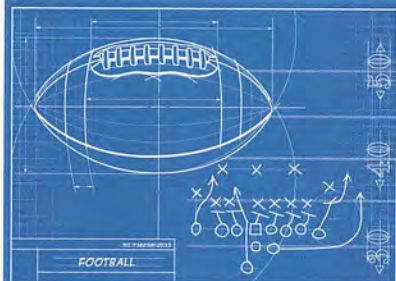
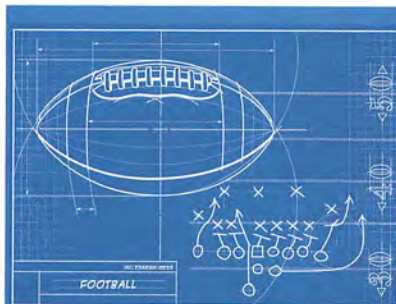
33 MATT O'HANLON 5-11 200 SR.
3 Rickey Thenarse 6-0 205 Sr.

P

90 ALEX HENERY 6-2 175 JR.
96 Brett Maher 6-0 170 RFr.

PR

21 TIM MARLOWE 5-10 175 RFR.
2 Antonio Bell 6-2 180 Fr.



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ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO.	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN (HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE)
95	** Allen, Pierre	DE	6-5	265	Jr.	Denver, Colo. (Thomas Jefferson)
21	** Amukamara, Prince	CB	6-1	200	Jr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Apollo)
70	Anderson, Kenny	DE	6-2	240	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard West)
	Ankrah, Jason	DE	6-4	250	Fr.	Gaithersburg, Md. (Quince Orchard)
4	** Asante, Larry	S	6-1	215	Sr.	Alexandria, Va. (Hayfield/Coffeyville CC)
	Ash, Nick	OL	6-5	260	Fr.	Keller, Texas
66	Barrett, Cruz	OL	6-4	310	Jr.	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)
	Barry, Robert	TE	6-8	220	Fr.	Battle Creek, Neb.
83	Bechtold, Damon	TE	6-4	235	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Westside)
2	Bell, Antonio	WR	6-2	180	Fr.	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)
39	Blatchford, Justin	CB	6-1	195	RFr.	Ponca, Neb.
14	* Blue, Anthony	CB	5-10	185	So.	Cedar Hill, Texas
1	* Brooks, Chris	WR	6-2	215	Sr.	St. Louis, Mo. (Hazelwood East)
72	** Burkes, Jaivorio	OL	6-5	295	Jr.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Moon Valley)
	Burkhead, Rex	RB	5-11	200	Fr.	Plano, Texas
42	Camarata, Joseph	LB	5-10	225	RFr.	Overland Park, Kan.
82	*** Cammack, Wes	WR	5-11	200	Sr.	DeWitt, Neb. (Tri-County)
58	* Caputo, Mike	OL	6-1	275	So.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
8	Cassidy, Austin	S	6-1	210	So.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
19	** Castille, Quentin	IB	6-1	235	Jr.	LaPorte, Texas
	Chapek, Brandon	OL	6-5	320	Fr.	Wahoo, Neb. (Bishop Neumann)
77	Choi, Seung Hoon	OL	6-2	295	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Christian)
62	** Christensen, Andy	OL	6-3	310	Sr.	Bennington, Neb.
	Clark, Tyson	WR	6-4	185	Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. (East)
	Coffey, Jesse	OL	6-7	290	Fr.	Denton, Texas (Guyer)
51	Compton, Will	LB	6-2	220	RFr.	Bonne Terre, Mo. (North County)
6	Cooper, Khiry	WR	6-2	195	RFr.	Shreveport, La. (Calvary Baptist Academy)
81	Cotton, Ben	TE	6-6	240	RFr.	Ames, Iowa
94	* Crick, Jared	DT	6-6	285	So.	Cozad, Neb.
	Daake, Tyler	P/PK	6-2	190	Fr.	Norfolk, Neb. (Norfolk Catholic)
27	Damkroger, Jonathon	P/PK	6-1	185	So.	Firth, Neb. (Norris)
20	Dean, Jase	CB	6-0	185	RFr.	Bridgeport, Neb.
15	* Dennard, Alfonzo	CB	5-10	190	So.	Rochelle, Ga. (Wilcox County)
52	*** Dillard, Phillip	LB	6-1	240	Sr.	Tulsa, Okla. (Jenks)
46	Dixon, Taylor	WR	5-11	190	RFr.	Wauneta, Neb. (Wauneta-Palisade)
16	Ebke, Jim	S	6-0	215	So.	Lincoln, Neb. (East/South Dakota State)
92	Fahie, Tyrone	DE	6-3	255	Jr.	Virginia Beach, Va. (Ocean Lakes)
	Failla, Nick	WR	5-10	180	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
42	Fisher, Sean	LB	6-6	230	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
11	* Gilleylen, Curenski	WR	6-0	220	So.	Leander, Texas
91	Glassman, Dan	DE	6-4	250	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
29	Gomes, Dejon	CB	6-0	190	Jr.	Hayward, Calif. (Logan/San Francisco City College)
	Green, Andrew	DB	6-0	180	Fr.	San Antonio, Texas (James Madison)
17	Green, Cody	QB	6-4	215	Fr.	Dayton, Texas
41	** Grove, Thomas	LB	6-2	225	Jr.	Arlington, Neb.
28	** Hagg, Eric	S	6-2	205	Jr.	Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood)
80	Harvey, David	DE	6-4	275	Sr.	LaPlata, Md. (McDonough)
30	* Hays, Mike	FB	6-1	240	So.	Papillion, Neb. (Papillion-LaVista)
10	** Helu Jr., Roy	IB	6-0	215	Jr.	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon Valley)
90	** Henery, Alex	PK/P	6-2	175	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Burke)
74	Henry, Ricky	OL	6-4	300	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Burke/N. Dakota State College of Science)
8	** Henry, Will	WR	6-5	215	Jr.	El Paso, Texas (J.M. Hanks)
67	*** Hickman, Jacob	OL	6-4	295	Sr.	Bakersfield, Calif. (Centennial)
80	* Hill, Ryan	TE	6-3	250	So.	Arvada, Colo. (West)
35	* Holt, Matt	LB	6-0	200	So.	Lee's Summit, Mo. (West)
18	*** Holt, Menelik	WR	6-4	220	Sr.	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)
	Hron, Mitch	LB	6-2	220	Fr.	Schuyler, Neb.
85	Hyland, KC	WR	6-6	205	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Pius X)
58	Jackson, Justin	DL	6-3	270	RFr.	Roca, Neb. (Norris)
28	Jones, Austin	IB	5-10	210	So.	Aurora, Colo.
73	* Jones, D.J.	OL	6-5	315	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)
	Jones, Dwight	OL	6-4	240	Fr.	Gretna, Neb.
78	* Jones, Marcel	OL	6-7	310	So.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Trevor Browne)
	Kanne, Colin	DL	6-4	260	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard West)
	Kellogg Jr., Ron	QB	6-1	210	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Westside)
	Kerr, J.T.	TE	6-4	230	Fr.	San Diego, Calif. (Scripps Ranch)
	Kildow, Ty	WR	5-7	165	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard South)
	Kinnie, Brandon	WR	6-3	215	So.	Kansas City, Mo. (Grandview/Fort Scott CC)
85	Klingelhoefer, Faron	DT	6-2	255	RFr.	Amherst, Neb.
54	* Koehler, Colton	LB	6-1	230	Sr.	Harvard, Neb. (Harvard/Nebraska Wesleyan)
44	Kreikemeier, Micah	LB	6-3	215	RFr.	West Point, Neb. (Central Catholic)
	Kuhl, Adam	LS	6-2	255	Fr.	Maple Valley, Iowa (Maple Valley Community)

Numerical Roster

NO.	NAME	PO
1	Brooks, Chris	WR
2	Bell, Antonio	WR
3	Lee, Zac	QB
3	Thenarse, Rickey	S
4	Asante, Larry	S
5	West, Anthony	CB
6	Cooper, Khiry	WR
7	Spano, Kody	QB
8	Cassidy, Austin	S
8	Henry, Will	WR
9	Lester, Ben	WR
10	Helu Jr., Roy	IB
11	Gilleylen, Curenski	WR
12	Osborne, Courtney	S
13	Smith, P.J.	S
14	Blue, Anthony	CB
14	Ward, Lester	IB
15	Dennard, Alfonzo	CB
15	Washington, Latravis	QB
16	Ebke, Jim	S
17	Green, Cody	QB
17	Williams, Josh	DE
18	Holt, Menelik	WR
19	Castille, Quentin	IB
20	Dean, Jase	CB
20	Kunalic, Adi	PK
21	Amukamara, Prince	CB
21	Marlowe, Tim	WR
22	Wald, Mason	S
23	Thorell, Lance	CB
24	Paul, Niles	WR
24	Watson, Adam	WR
25	Reed, Kyler	TE
25	Wallace, Jeremy	RB
26	Osborne, Steven	WR
27	Damkroger, Jonathon	P/PK
28	Hagg, Eric	S
28	Jones, Austin	IB
29	Gomes, Dejon	CB
29	Okafor, Collins	IB
30	Hays, Mike	FB
32	Mendoza, Marcus	WR
33	O'Hanlon, Matt	S
35	Holt, Matt	LB
35	Makovicka, Jordan	RB
36	May, Mathew	LB
37	Thomsen, Kevin	FB
39	Blatchford, Justin	CB
40	Lawrence, Blake	LB
41	Grove, Thomas	LB
42	Camarata, Joseph	LB
42	Fisher, Sean	LB
43	Moravec, Brent	S
44	Kreikemeier, Micah	LB
44	McNeill, Mike	TE
45	Makovicka, Justin	FB
45	Whaley, Alonzo	LB
46	Dixon, Taylor	WR
47	Yancy, William	DE
48	Legate, Tyler	FB
49	Young, Dreu	TE
50	Toailoa, Quentin	OL
51	Compton, Will	LB
52	Dillard, Phillip	LB
54	Koehler, Colton	LB
55	Steinkuhler, Baker	DT
58	Caputo, Mike	OL
58	Jackson, Justin	DL
59	Thorson, Brian	OL
62	Christensen, Andy	OL
63	Martin, Ben	DT
63	Meyer, Derek	OL
65	McDermott, Colin	DE

20	**	Kunalic, Adi	PK	6-0	190
40	**	Lawrence, Blake	LB	6-3	220
3		Lee, Zac	QB	6-2	210
48		Legate, Tyler	FB	5-10	225
9		Lester, Ben	WR	5-10	170
		Lewis, Tyrone	LB	6-2	195
75		Lingenfelter, Luke	OL	6-4	255
		Long, Jake	TE	6-4	230
		Long, Spencer	DE	6-4	250
96		Maher, Brett	PK/P	6-0	170
35		Makovicka, Jordan	RB	5-10	195
45		Makovicka, Justin	FB	6-1	230
		Mangieri, P.J.	LS	6-4	245
		Manninger, Matt	LB	6-1	220
21		Marlowe, Tim	WR	5-10	175
63	*	Martin, Ben	DT	6-4	260
		Martin, Eric	LB	6-2	215
88		Martin, Jay	TE	6-2	225
		Martinez, Taylor	QB	6-1	185
36	*	May, Mathew	LB	6-1	210
86		McClure, Mychael	TE	6-5	235
65		McDermott, Colin	DE	6-2	240
66		McDermott, Connor	DE	6-2	240
44	**	McNeill, Mike	TE	6-4	240
67		Meginnis, Sam	LS/LB	6-2	220
32		Mendoza, Marcus	WR	5-10	185
96		Meredith, Cameron	DE	6-4	260
63		Meyer, Derek	OL	6-5	315
		Middleton, Lazarri	DB	6-1	190
68		Molek, Josh	DT	6-3	245
90	*	Moore, Terrence	DT	6-3	285
43		Moravec, Brent	S	6-0	185
		Nickens, Brodrick	OL	6-5	285
33	***	O'Hanlon, Matt	S	5-11	200
29		Okafor, Collins	IB	6-1	225
12		Osborne, Courtney	S	6-3	185
26		Osborne, Steven	WR	6-4	195
24	**	Paul, Niles	WR	6-1	215
		Paulsen, Devin	LB	6-2	210
		Pensick, Cole	DL	6-2	260
		Qvale, Brent	OL	6-7	335
		Randle, Thaddeus	DL	6-1	255
25		Reed, Kyler	TE	6-3	225
		Richards, Wil	DB	5-11	185
		Robinson, Dontrayevous	RB	6-1	215
		Sirles, Jeremiah	OL	6-6	280
65	**	Smith, Mike	OL	6-6	290
13		Smith, P.J.	S	6-2	205
7		Spano, Kody	QB	6-2	215
		Starkebaum, Colby	LB	6-1	215
55		Steinkuhler, Baker	DT	6-6	295
71		Stoddard, Graham	LB	6-2	225
93	***	Suh, Ndamukong	DT	6-4	300
3	***	Thenarse, Rickey	S	6-0	205
79		Thompson, Brandon	OL	6-6	300
37		Thomsen, Kevin	FB	6-2	235
23	*	Thorell, Lance	CB	6-1	195
59		Thorson, Brian	OL	6-3	290
50		Toailoa, Quentin	OL	6-4	300
99	***	Turner, Barry	DE	6-3	265
22	*	Wald, Mason	S	5-11	195
25		Wallace, Jeremy	RB	6-1	235
14		Ward, Lester	IB	6-3	215
		Washington, Dijon	DB	6-0	175
15	**	Washington, Latravis	QB	6-3	225
24		Watson, Adam	WR	6-0	195
		Wells, Brett	TE	6-4	200
5	**	West, Anthony	CB	6-0	205
45		Whaley, Alonzo	LB	6-1	225
		Williams, Chris	LB	6-0	230
17		Williams, Josh	DE	6-4	245
68	**	Williams, Keith	OL	6-5	320
47		Yancy, William	DE	6-4	245
49	**	Young, Dreu	TE	6-4	245
		Zimmerer, C.J.	RB	6-0	215

Jr.	Fort Worth, Texas (North Crowley)
Jr.	Shawnee Mission, Kan. (Shawnee Mission West)
Jr.	San Francisco, Calif. (St. Ignatius Prep/San Francisco CC)
RFr.	Neligh, Neb. (Neligh-Oakdale/South Dakota)
So.	Tecumseh, Neb.
Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. (North Star)
So.	Plainview, Neb.
Fr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
Fr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
RFr.	Kearney, Neb.
RFr.	Ulysses, Neb. (East Butler)
Jr.	Ulysses, Neb. (East Butler)
Fr.	Peoria, Ill. (Dunlap)
RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
RFr.	Youngstown, Ohio (Cardinal Mooney)
Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
Fr.	Moreno Valley, Calif. (Rancho Verde)
So.	Waverly, Neb.
Fr.	Corona, Calif. (Centennial)
So.	Imperial, Neb. (Chase County)
RFr.	Wisner, Neb. (Wisner-Pilger)
RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
Jr.	Kirkwood, Mo.
RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (East)
So.	Houston, Texas (Spring Woods)
RFr.	Santa Ana, Calif. (Mater Dei)
Sr.	Campbell, Neb. (Silver Lake/Kansas State)
Fr.	Long Beach, Calif. (Poly)
RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Skutt Catholic)
So.	New Orleans, La. (McDonogh 35)
RFr.	Grand Island, Neb. (Central Catholic)
Fr.	Alliance, Neb.
Sr.	Bellevue, Neb. (Bellevue East)
RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Westside)
RFr.	Garland, Texas (South Garland)
RFr.	Garland, Texas (South Garland)
Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (North)
Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Lincoln Christian)
Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Northeast)
Fr.	Williston, N.D.
Fr.	Galena Park, Texas (North Shore)
RFr.	Shawnee, Kan. (St. Thomas Aquinas)
Fr.	Lee's Summit, Mo. (Lee's Summit West)
Fr.	Euless, Texas (Trinity)
Fr.	Lakewood, Colo. (Bear Creek)
Jr.	Las Vegas, Nev. (Palo Verde)
RFr.	River Ridge, La. (John Curtis)
RFr.	Stephenville, Texas
Fr.	Sterling, Colo.
RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
Sr.	Portland, Ore. (Grant)
Sr.	Los Angeles, Calif. (Jordan)
RFr.	The Woodlands, Texas
So.	Elkhorn, Neb.
So.	Loomis, Neb.
RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
RFr.	Highland, Calif. (Redlands East Valley)
Sr.	Antioch, Tenn. (Brentwood Academy)
So.	Birmingham, Ala. (Vestavia Hills)
RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Bryan)
RFr.	Brenham, Texas
Fr.	Lawndale, Calif. (Leuzinger)
Jr.	Bradenton, Fla. (Baysshore)
Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Niwt [Colo.])
Fr.	St. Paul, Neb.
Jr.	San Diego, Calif. (Point Loma)
RFr.	Madisonville, Texas
Fr.	Abilene, Texas
RFr.	Denton, Texas (Ryan)
Jr.	Florissant, Mo. (McClure North)
So.	Glendale, Ariz. (Ironwood)
Jr.	Cozad, Neb.
Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Gross)

NO.	NAME	POS.
65	Smith, Mike	OL
66	Barrett, Cruz	OL
66	McDermott, Conor	DE
67	Hickman, Jacob	OL
67	Meginnis, Sam	LS/LB
68	Molek, Josh	DT
68	Williams, Keith	OL
70	Anderson, Kenny	DE
71	Stoddard, Graham	LB
72	Burkes, Jaivorio	OL
73	Jones, D.J.	OL
74	Henry, Ricky	OL
75	Lingenfelter, Luke	OL
77	Choi, Seung Hoon	OL
78	Jones, Marcel	OL
79	Thompson, Brandon	OL
80	Harvey, David	DE
80	Hill, Ryan	TE
81	Cotton, Ben	TE
82	Cammack, Wes	WR
83	Bechtold, Damon	TE
85	Hyland, KC	WR
85	Klingelhoefer, Faron	DT
86	McClure, Mychael	TE
88	Martin, Jay	TE
90	Henery, Alex	PK/P
90	Moore, Terrence	DT
91	Glassman, Dan	DE
92	Fahie, Tyrone	DE
93	Suh, Ndamukong	DT
94	Crick, Jared	DT
95	Allen, Pierre	DE
96	Maher, Brett	PK/P
96	Meredith, Cameron	DE
99	Turner, Barry	DE
	Ankrah, Jason	DE
	Ash, Nick	OL
	Barry, Robert	TE
	Burkhead, Rex	RB
	Chapek, Brandon	OL
	Clark, Tyson	WR
	Coffey, Jesse	OL
	Daake, Tyler	P/PK
	Failla, Nick	WR
	Green, Andrew	DB
	Hron, Mitch	LB
	Jones, Dwight	OL
	Kanne, Colin	DL
	Kellogg Jr., Ron	QB
	Kerr, J.T.	TE
	Kildow, Ty	WR
	Kinnie, Brandon	WR
	Kuhl, Adam	LS
	Lewis, Tyrone	LB
	Long, Jake	TE
	Long, Spencer	DE
	Mangieri, P.J.	LS
	Manninger, Matt	LB
	Martin, Eric	LB
	Martinez, Taylor	QB
	Middleton, Lazarri	DB
	Nickens, Brodrick	OL
	Paulsen, Devin	LB
	Pensick, Cole	DL
	Qvale, Brent	OL
	Randle, Thaddeus	DL
	Richards, Wil	DB
	Robinson, Dontrayevous	RB
	Sirles, Jeremiah	OL
	Starkebaum, Colby	LB
	Washington, Dijon	DB
	Wells, Brett	TE
	Williams, Chris	LB
	Zimmerer, C.J.	RB

Huskers Illustrated cornered a number of media members from Nebraska and around the country and asked them to give their predictions for Bo Pelini's second season. Nobody picked less than eight wins, however, some have high expectations for the Huskers in 2009.

KEN HAMBLETON (8-5)

Lincoln Journal Star

I picked 7-6 last year and the Huskers were 9-4. So I'll go with 8-5 this year, winning the home schedule against the teams that are as strong as my 401K, and losing to OU. I see road losses at Virginia Tech, Missouri and KU. The Huskers have yet another new quarterback, a rebuilt offensive line, some linebackers and some D-line guys, but nothing close to experience in the secondary, and that's a big gap in the big offense of the Big 12.

DAVE HUNT (11-3)

KLKN TV

OK, so maybe I've gotten caught up in the late season surge in 2008, but I think the Huskers are set-up for a break-out year. The Blackshirts will improve even further from the amazing progress made in '08, and I say they finish first in the Big 12 on that side of the ball. Offensively, Zac Lee simply manages the offense, ala Joe Ganz, and Roy Helu, Jr. becomes a premier running back in the conference.

The only losses this season come at the hands of Virginia Tech and a superior Oklahoma team. Nebraska wins the Big 12 North after a hard-fought win over Kansas, then loses to Texas in the Big 12 Title Game. The Huskers head to the Cotton Bowl where a win over Ole Miss awaits them.

CHRIS SCHMIDT (10-4)

Huskies Illustrated Radio

Can the Big Red repeat or surpass last years win total? I think so. Nebraska's back seven on defense will be deeper and more comfortable in year two, the D-Line anchored by Suh will put plenty of pressure on opposing offenses. My question is the

offense. Can Zac Lee step in and lead this team to nine wins or better? To do that he'll need a healthy offensive line, stellar play from Helu and Catillo, but more importantly, the wide receiving core needs to bring its performance from the spring game to every game to make NU's offense balanced. The Huskers will keep it close in Blacksburg, but lose. A three game stretch at Baylor, home to OU, and at KU will not be easy (yes I said Baylor, possible trap game before hooking up with Stoops the following week in Lincoln). The Friday after Thanksgiving will be another test. Nebraska wins in Lawrence, falls in Boulder and can't get past Texas in the Big 12 Title Game. Hello Holiday Bowl and a win over the Pac 10's No. 2 team.

BOB HAMAR (9-4)

Grand Island Independent

A 10-win season is certainly a possibility, but some of those wins will be extremely difficult to get. The Huskers certainly could go 6-1 at home with the loss coming to Oklahoma. Virginia Tech will be a huge challenge early on the road. Road games at Missouri, Baylor, Kansas and Colorado certainly aren't automatic wins. It would seem that 9-4 would be a reasonable record this season.

JOHN HEASTON (10-2)

The Reader

This is the year the order is really restored. With another year in the new system, the Huskers will start winning the close ones and there will be an upset. Texas Tech at home will be the loudest game of the year. It's payback time. Nebraska will take one of these three – Virginia Tech, Oklahoma or Missouri – and run the rest.

JOHN BISHOP (9-4)

Lincoln's News & Talk, 1400 KLIN

If memory serves, I have been within a game of being right-on-the-money in picking Big Red football fortunes. With that, here is 2009's "pick to click." The Huskers will take advantage of Missouri and Texas Tech drop-offs and score of couple of "name" victories with a good Pelini defense. Virginia Tech and Oklahoma are likely losses. Kansas, Colorado and Baylor are definitely swing games where I see NU taking two of three. Overall, a 9-3 regular season looks do-able, with a nice bowl trip and a shot at 10 wins.

KEVIN KUGLER (10-3)

1620 The Zone/NET Sports

Nebraska is poised for another solid year in Pelini's second year at the helm. After a 3-1 start in the non-conference season, suffering a close loss to a top 10 Virginia Tech, the Huskers jump right in with a big battle in Columbia. Nebraska prevails in Missouri for the first time in years, then rattles off back to back wins at home over Texas Tech and Iowa State. The 6-1 Huskers travel to Waco, nipping the Bears on the road to move to 7-1. Oklahoma bests the Huskers in Lincoln, and Nebraska follows up with a close loss on the road in Lawrence to the Jayhawks. The Huskers take out their frustrations on Kansas State and Colorado, finishing 9-3 but falling short of the Big 12 Championship game. Nebraska's bowl victory gives the Huskers a 10-3 record, the first 10 win season since 2003.

LANE GRINDLE (10-4)

Husker Sports Network

The key game in the 2009 season is... Baylor. I know it seems bizarre but I feel this is a real swing game for the Huskers. On the road in Waco isn't exactly hostile – however – it could lull a Nebraska team asleep. Oklahoma follows Baylor on the schedule so the Huskers will have to

make sure they don't look past this game. Bo Pelini is a great coach for this kind of situation, so I still think Nebraska wins it. The Huskers win the North when they go to Lawrence and beat the Fighting Manginos but have too many "toss-up" games to get through the league unscathed. A game for the league title awaits the Huskers at the "Jerry-Dome" followed by a Holiday Bowl berth.

MITCHELL LIGHT (10-5)

Athlon Sports, Managing Editor

Nebraska has some nice momentum as a program and appears to be the best team in the Big 12 North. But the power still resides in the South, so even though we picked NU No. 1 in its division, the Huskers are probably only the fourth best team in the league. This is solid Cornhusker team that could be really good if Zac Lee (or Cody Green) steps up at quarterback. They should be very good on both the offensive and defensive line, which, obviously, are two good places to be good. The Huskers finish 10-5 overall, with a loss to OU in the Big 12 title game and a loss to Cal in the Holiday Bowl.

BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON (9-5)

Lincoln Journal Star

I think the Huskers will be much improved on defense and a slightly better outfit overall than last year, though the record might not show it. Road games against Missouri, Kansas and even Baylor (yes, Baylor) will play a large part in deciding how this season is viewed. I favor Nebraska to win the North, but think the winner of the division might have three conference losses like last year. I see as many as five "toss-up" games on NU's schedule.

BRIAN ROSENTHAL (10-4)

Lincoln Journal Star

Somebody in the Big 12 North has to step up with a defense this season. Why not the Ndamukong Suh-led Huskers?

Nebraska's North title hopes rest on a trip to Lawrence, where defense – particularly pressure on Todd Reesing – will be the difference.

TERRY DOUGLASS (8-5)

Grand Island Independent

This prediction won't thrill most Nebraska fans, but if you consider the schedule, the fact that the Huskers are breaking in a new starting quarterback and return second-fewest number of starters in the Big 12, I think it's realistic. If Coach Bo Pelini can somehow squeeze out another nine-win season in 2009, he'll certainly deserve his offseason pay raise.

JEFF WILKERSON (10-4)

ESPN Radio 1480

Ten wins in 2009 may not seem like a huge improvement from Bo Pelini's first season, but the difference should be noticeable – especially on the defensive side of the ball. The Cornhuskers open with two wins before falling to Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. Pelini's squad rebounds and wins five in a row before losing back-to-back games against Oklahoma in Memorial Stadium and against Kansas on the road. The one game that could end up swinging either way is Missouri – two equalizers: at night, and on an unconventional Thursday. Nebraska finishes 9-3 in the regular season, loses in the Big 12 Championship Game and wins a bowl game in the New Year.

SEAN CALLAHAN (9-5)

HuskersIllustrated.com

The way I see it right now, Nebraska has pretty much five guaranteed wins in Florida Atlantic, Arkansas State, Louisiana Monroe, Iowa State and Kansas State. I think NU will lose at Virginia Tech and at home against Oklahoma. Games at Baylor, Missouri, Kansas and Colorado, along with a home game against Texas Tech will ultimately decide the fate of this season. If Zac Lee can stay healthy and take things in stride, I see NU winning at least 8 or 9

games this year during the regular season. I think they also have a very good chance to win the North because KU plays Texas Tech, Texas and Oklahoma—three very difficult South Division games.

Nebraska finishes 9-3 with a North Division title, but loses to Oklahoma in the Big 12 title game in Dallas. I think NU will accept a bid to play in the Holiday Bowl and finish the season off with a victory over California.

ED LITTLER (10-3)

KHAS TV

I don't see Nebraska winning at Virginia Tech or at home vs. Oklahoma and I think they'll win two of three at Missouri, Kansas and Colorado. If they win two, they'll have a chance to win the North. I'm just not going to give them the North with a first year QB.

I'll say they win the bowl game and go 10-3. The game at Baylor could be a narrow win, same at home vs. Texas Tech. In order to be a contender for the North again, or Top 20, Nebraska must resume regularly defeating the Kansas teams which they did without fail for about 30 years.

OLIN BUCHANAN (9-4)

Yahoo! Sports

Look for the Huskers to make significant progress in their second season under Bo Pelini. The defense will be nasty and the running game will be solid. However, questions and quarterback temper the enthusiasm somewhat, particularly against a tough schedule. But if Zac Lee – or another QB – has a strong year the Huskers could win the Big 12 North.

DIRK CHATELAIN (10-4)

Omaha World-Herald

There's still not enough talent on defense to launch Nebraska back to national relevance. But the Big 12 North will be worse than it was in 2007 and 2008, and that opens the door for the Huskers.

Much depends on Zac Lee, of course. If he stays healthy, I think he will be as good, if not better, than Joe Ganz. I think NU overcomes an upset loss at Baylor, beats Kansas and wins the North. A loss in the Big 12 title game to Texas, a bowl win and the Huskers gladly embrace a 10-4 finish.

JON SCHUETZ (11-3)

KETV

I look for a big jump in the second year of the Bo Pelini era. Nebraska finishes 11-3 with a Big 12 North Division championship. I see an early season loss at Virginia Tech, as a young offense struggles on the road against an always tough Hokie defense. The other regular season loss comes against Oklahoma, and another loss to the Sooners in the Big 12 Championship game. Games at Baylor, at Kansas and at Colorado have the potential to derail the Huskers, but this team is learning how to compete again... and win.

MIKE'L SEVERE (11-3)

KOZN 1620 The Zone

Nebraska starts the season with a couple of three touchdown wins over Florida Atlantic and Arkansas State. I think Virginia Tech will be too tough in Blacksburg, but the game will be close because of the Blackshirts.

Lafayette and Missouri will both be blowouts. NU will beat the Tigers by at least four touchdowns. Wins over Texas Tech, ISU and Baylor will have NU at 7-1. OU is no longer that much more talented than NU, but it will be tough for the Blackshirts to contain Gresham, Murray and Bradford. The Big 12 North comes down to the trip to Kansas. I think the KU defense isn't good enough to contain the Big Red. Kansas State won't win 4 games and Colorado is a .500 team. Winning in Boulder won't be easy, but the Huskers end the regular season 10-2. A loss to OU/OSU/TX in the Big 12 championship game puts the Huskers in the Cotton Bowl.

TOM DIENHART (9-3)

Yahoo! Sports

I expect Nebraska to enjoy another nine-win season. The schedule isn't too difficult, which will help a program that is in transition on offense behind new quarterback Zac Lee, who needs some targets to emerge. The biggest key is defense. Bo Pelini had his unit playing beyond expectations last year. And the group welcomes back six starters. Bottom line: count on the Blackshirts playing better than expected. Having a big-time kicker like Alex Henery could help the Huskers steal a game or two with a late field goal.

J.J. DAVIS (9-3)

KPTM Fox 42

I'm picking the Big Red to go 9-3. Based on the experience factor, I see the Blackshirts carrying the offense, I can't see the Huskers winning in Blacksburg. Been there, used to cover the Hokies... it's a tough place to play, plus Virginia Tech always has a solid defense. Defensive coordinator Bud Foster is the quiet-man's Bo Pelini. Oklahoma will win at the Cathedral. Why? It's OKLAHOMA, Heisman Trophy winner and all that. Then in Lawrence? I like Todd Reesing. The kid is a winner, plain and simple. So there you go.

MATT SCHICK (9-5)

KETV Newswatch Seven

With potentially four new starting quarterbacks in the North division, the race to Dallas is wide open. Kansas having to play the big three in the South should give the Huskers a game in hand, but Nebraska's Big 12 schedule only has a couple of gimmies. With the help of a strong running game and a much-improved defense, the Huskers will go 5-3 in conference play and win the division, winning a three-way tie-breaker with Missouri and Kansas by virtue of the BCS standings. Bo Pelini

will hold a news conference defending the tie-breaker system, while Mark Mangino will deny knowing anything about the 2009* hanging under the list of "Big 12 North Championships" in the Jayhawks' meeting room.

I won't rule out a Big 12 Championship, but just getting to the game is the next step for this program.

ADRIAN FIALA (9-3)

Husker Sports Network

Season - 9-3; Big 12 - 6-2; Bowl win in the Holiday Bowl. 2008 was a great start for Bo Pelini and his staff. They brought back attitude, effort and confidence. A Big 12 North Co-Championship and a Gator Bowl win in their first year means there are plenty of positives to carry over to 2009.

Eight wins lurk on the schedule with four games in question. Road games to pre-season No. 7 Virginia Tech and Missouri - a Thursday night National TV game - will be most difficult along with a home game against pre-season No. 3 Oklahoma, which some say may be one of Stoops' best defenses at OU. The Huskers travel to Kansas following the OU game and have to avoid the trap in Lawrence. I think Nebraska takes the other five games and puts another Big Red Brick in the Husker Foundation.

AARON BABCOCK (9-4)

Editor, Huskers Illustrated Magazine

Despite incredible expectations, it will be difficult for the Huskers to follow the excitement that followed the 2008 season. Lee, a talented, but rookie quarterback will improve as the season develops.

The good news is a 5-3 Big 12 record could still win a share of the North, meaning the winner of Nebraska at Kansas will play in the title game. I predict the Huskers go 8-4 in the regular season, miss the title game, but finish strong with a bowl victory.

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JANUARY 2009 HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED 65



[95] Pierre Allen

Jr., Defensive end, 6-5, 265
Denver, Colo. (Thomas Jefferson)



Perhaps last year's season-ending injury to Barry Turner was a blessing in disguise. As a result, Pierre Allen gained

valuable experience, and enters his junior season as a returning starter. "I learned a lot," Allen said. "I'm more comfortable. I can play faster, because I'm able to read a lot of different things I learned from last year." Allen finished fourth on the team with 52 tackles, including 21 solo, and ranked third in tackles for loss (10) and sacks (five).

[21] Prince Amukamara

Jr., Defensive back, 6-1, 200
Glendale, Ariz. (Apollo)



Amukamara and Anthony West saw the bulk of spring repetitions at No. 1 cornerback, but they'll feel the heat

from backups. Amukamara started three games as a sophomore, and played in 13, with 34 tackles and three pass break-ups. Amukamara will also be a key player on special teams.

[4] Larry Asante

Sr., Safety, 6-1, 215
Alexandria, Va. (Hayfield/Coffeyville CC)



Asante is Nebraska's most experienced player in the secondary, having started all but three games over the last two seasons.

He was second to Ndamukong Suh in tackles last season, collecting 67, including 45 solo. His first career interception came in last year's final home game against Colorado, and he collected his first career sack against Baylor.

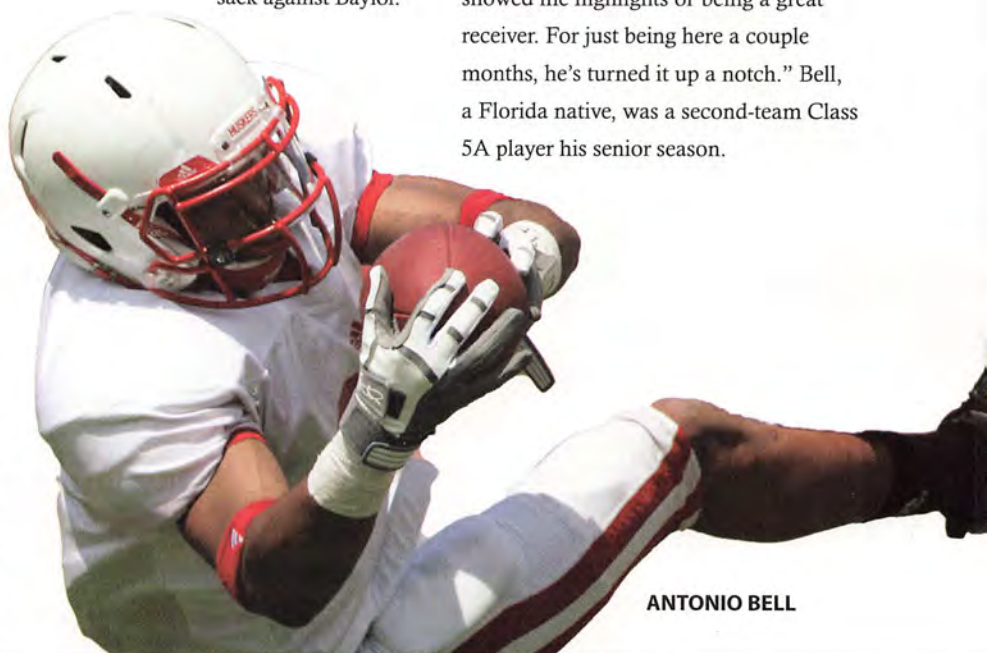
[2] Antonio Bell

Fr., Wide receiver, 6-2, 180
Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)



Bell signed with Nebraska in 2008 but wasn't able to join the team until January.

Once in Lincoln, Bell immediately began making impressions. He had two catches in the spring game, and also showed speed on his five kickoff and three punt returns. "Wow," said senior teammate Chris Brooks. "He showed me highlights of being a great receiver. For just being here a couple months, he's turned it up a notch." Bell, a Florida native, was a second-team Class 5A player his senior season.



ANTONIO BELL

[14] Anthony Blue

So., Cornerback, 5-10, 185
Cedar Hill, Texas



Blue missed all of the 2008 season after suffering a knee injury in winter conditioning. He returned full strength for the spring,

but just now is regaining confidence, mostly in trusting his knee again. He had five tackles in the spring game. Blue played in 12 games as a true freshman and collected 18 tackles.

[11] Chris Brooks

Sr., Wide receiver, 6-2, 215
St. Louis, Mo. (Hazelwood East)



If his five receptions for 48 yards in the spring game are any indication, Brooks is primed for a breakout season as

a senior. The Huskers could use that, too, with the losses of Todd Peterson and Nate Swift. Brooks has been seldom used throughout his career but showed flashes late last season, including against Kansas, when he caught a 25-yard TD pass.



[72] Jaivorio Burkes

Jr., Offensive tackle, 6-5, 295
Phoenix, Ariz. (Moon Valley)



Burkes' status entering fall camp is uncertain. He missed all of the spring season because of an undisclosed medical condition. He also sat out most of the 2008 fall camp because of medical reasons (high blood pressure) but returned in time to play in all 13 games, including four starts.

[82] Wes Cammack

Sr., Wide receiver, 5-11, 200
DeWitt, Neb. (Tri-County)



Cammack, a walk-on, has played a back-up role throughout his career but could push for playing time as a senior.

His highlight of the spring game was a 40-yard TD reception from Zac Lee. Last season, he had a 5-yard reception and also contributed with nine tackles on special teams, mostly on kickoff coverage. His lone reception was on a pass thrown by Lee, one of only two Lee has thrown in competition. The other, incomplete, also was intended for Cammack.

[58] Mike Caputo

So., Center, 6-1, 275
Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)



Coaches admit that Caputo may be a bit undersized to play center but note that he makes up for

his lack of size by playing very sound technique.

That's a big reason the walk-on from Millard North

High School, stepped into the No. 1 center position during the spring. That allowed senior Jacob Hickman to slide over to right guard.

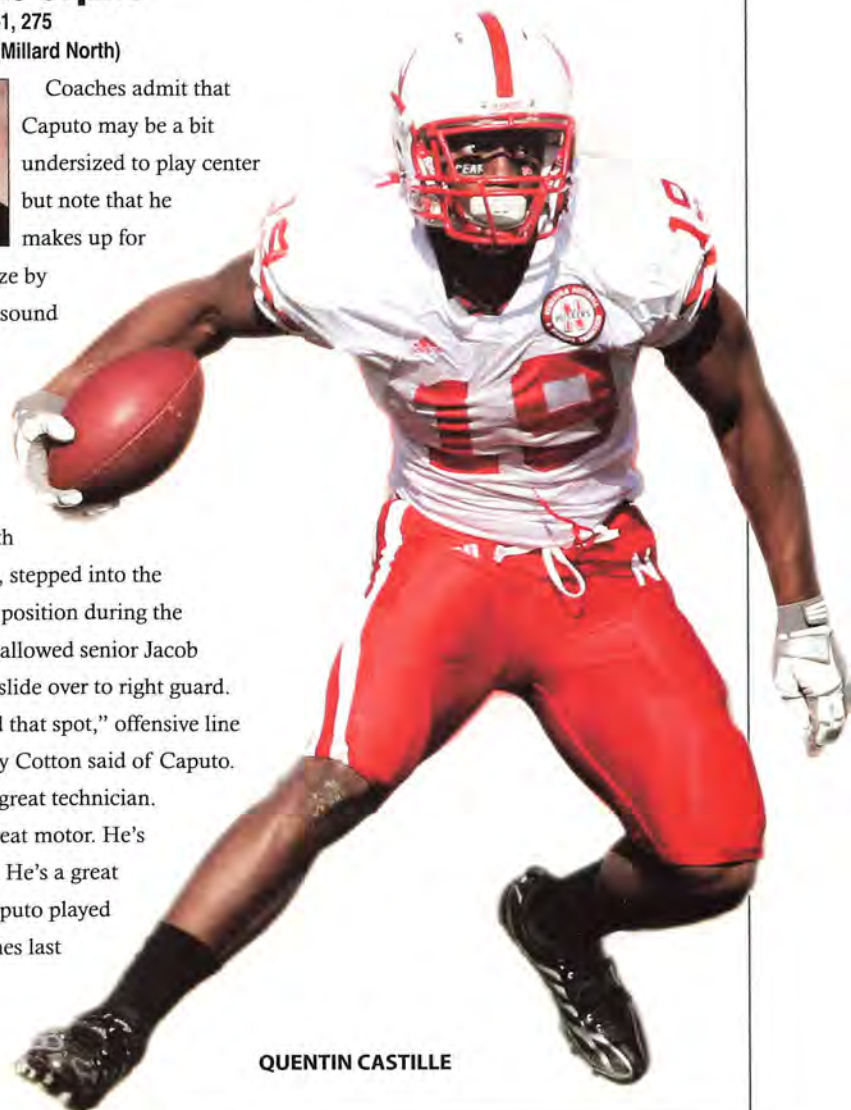
"He's earned that spot," offensive line coach Barney Cotton said of Caputo. "Caputo's a great technician. He's got a great motor. He's a self-starter. He's a great finisher." Caputo played in seven games last season.

[19] Quentin Castille

Jr., Running back, 6-1, 235
LaPorte, Texas



Castille shared snaps last season with Marlon Lucky and Roy Helu but proved in the Gator Bowl he can be a workhorse, too. With Lucky (turf toe) and Helu (leg infection) sidelined, Castille ran for a career-high 125 yards on 18 carries, with no fumbles. Castille had a strong spring, too, when he again became the sole No. 1 back because of Helu's injured hamstring. "As long as he continues to stay focused and works to improve, he's proven he can do what we need him to do, for sure," running backs coach Tim Beck said of Castille.



QUENTIN CASTILLE

[62] Andy Christensen

Sr., Offensive guard, 6-3, 210
Bennington, Neb.



Christensen is planning on returning, assuming the NCAA grants him a sixth season of eligibility (almost a certainty).

Christensen missed his redshirted freshman season with a shoulder injury, then missed most of the 2007 season when he injured his knee against USC. He returned late last season after a suspension but needed the off-season to get himself back in playing shape.

[51] Will Compton

RFr., Linebacker, 6-2, 220
Bonne Terre, Mo. (North County)



Compton remembers at least two occasions last season where coaches nearly inserted him into the game. He's glad now

they didn't. Compton preserved his redshirt, and will now challenge for a starting position at MIKE linebacker. Compton had a team-leading seven tackles for the White team in the spring game.

[6] Khiry Cooper

RFr., Wide receiver, 6-2, 195
Shreveport, La. (Calvary Baptist Academy)



Cooper made strong impressions last fall camp as a true freshman but redshirted. He then missed the spring season while

playing for the Nebraska baseball team. He played in 34 games, hitting .234 with seven RBI. Despite his spring absence, Cooper figures to be a key part of the wide receiver rotation this fall.

[81] Ben Cotton

RFr., 6-6, 240
Ames, Iowa



The son of offensive line coach Barney Cotton, Ben Cotton had a huge spring, capped by his four

receptions for 48 yards and one touchdown in the spring game. He redshirted last season, a year after playing both tight end and defensive end for Ames High School. Cotton also played basketball, baseball and threw discus in track.

[94] Jared Crick

So., Defensive tackle, 6-6, 285
Cozad, Neb.



Crick saw the opportunity to earn a starting position and immediately began assuming a leadership

role in winter conditioning. Teammates, including senior nose tackle Ndamukong Suh, noticed. Crick will likely replace Ty Steinkuhler and play alongside Suh. Last season, Crick had a pair of tackles while playing in nine games.

[15] Alfonzo Dennard

So., Cornerback, 5-10, 190
Rochelle, Ga. (Wilcox County)



Dennard earned playing time as a true freshman, seeing action

at both cornerback and on special teams. He's looking to expand his roles in both areas this season. Dennard returned eight kickoffs for 150 yards last season. That included a career-best 31-yard return in the Gator Bowl. He had five tackles.

[52] Phillip Dillard

Sr., Linebacker, 6-1, 240
Tulsa, Okla. (Jenks)



With 33 career games played, Dillard enters his senior season as Nebraska's most-experienced linebacker.

However, Dillard was mired toward the bottom of the depth chart throughout most of the spring season, for reasons coaches didn't want to address. Dillard had 38 tackles as a junior but missed the final four games of the regular season with an ankle injury.



ALFONZO DENNARD

[42] Sean Fisher

RFr., Linebacker, 6-6, 230
Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)



Fisher played in one game as a true freshman but regained the year of eligibility thanks to a medical redshirt. He had four tackles in the spring game, including one for loss. Fisher's primary linebacker position is BUCK. In high school, he starred at both safety and running back.

[11] Curenski Gilleylen

So., Wide receiver, 6-0, 220
Leander, Texas



Gilleylen played in 11 games as a redshirted freshman and finished with two catches for 11 yards. With his combination of strength and speed – and Nebraska's need for depth at receiver – Gilleylen figures to play a bigger role this season. He's also experienced as a kickoff return man.

[29] Dejon Gomes

Jr., Cornerback, 6-0, 190
Hayward, Calif. (Logan/San Francisco CC)



Gomes is among three players from Nebraska's 2009 recruiting class who joined the team in January and participated in spring ball. Gomes had three tackles and one pass breakup in the spring game. Last season at City College of San Francisco, Gomes had 14 pass breakups, four interceptions and five tackles for loss.

[17] Cody Green

Fr., Quarterback, 6-4, 215
Dayton, Texas



Green is a true freshman but gained valuable experience by participating in winter conditioning and spring practices. A hip injury slowed him at the start of the spring, but he completed 8-of-15 passes in the spring game for 81 yards. Perhaps most importantly, Green shook some nerves by playing in front of a big crowd. "Cody will never say he's nervous," offensive coordinator Shawn Watson said after the spring game, "but we know what a nervous guy looks like." Green will battle for the top back-up job behind Zac Lee but could also redshirt.

[28] Eric Hagg

Jr., Safety, 6-2, 205
Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood)



Hagg became a regular contributor at nickel back last season and could play either cornerback or safety this season. He came on strong toward the end of last season, evidenced by his performance in the Gator Bowl, when he had a pass break-up and a sack on Clemson's final drive. Of his 39 tackles last season, 29 were solo.

ERIC HAGG



[80] David Harvey

Sr., Defensive end, 6-4, 275
LaPlata, Md. (McDonough)



Harvey has seen little playing time throughout his career but could contribute this season as a back-up defensive end.

He also saw snaps during the spring at defensive tackle but moved back outside by the spring game. Harvey began his career at tight end before moving to defensive end prior to the 2006 season.

[90] Alex Henery

Jr., Kicker, 6-2, 175
Omaha, Neb. (Burke)



Henery is best remembered for his career-long 57-yard field goal that saved Nebraska in a 41-31 victory over Colorado.

Now, Henery is also displaying his skills as a punter, as Nebraska looks to replace Dan Titchener. Henery averaged 43.2 yards on four punts in the spring game. For his career, Henery is 26 of 29 on field goals and 101 of 102 on extra points.

[74] Ricky Henry

Jr., Offensive guard, 6-4, 300
Omaha, Neb. (Burke/North Dakota State College of Science)



Henry, who redshirted last season after he transferred from junior college, has developed a reputation as a fiery, competitive player who

plays through the whistle, and sometimes beyond. Terms like "madman" and "animal" have been used to describe Henry, who has yet to play in a game. He's been working mostly at right guard.

[10] Roy Helu, Jr.

Jr., Running back, 6-0, 215
Danville, Calif. (San Ramon Valley)



Helu made headlines when he arrived at Nebraska's pre-spring news conference 15 pounds heavier. He then showed in practices that the extra weight wouldn't slow him. In fact, coaches said the weight gain only enhanced Helu's explosiveness and elusiveness. "Arm tackles and things like that, not only can he elude people with his change of direction and cutting ability, but now he's able to run through them and run over them," running backs coach Tim Beck said. The only problem: Helu injured his hamstring and missed the latter part of spring practices, including the spring game. Helu averaged 6.4 yards per carry last season, the best by a Husker in seven seasons.



[8] Will Henry

Jr., Wide receiver, 6-6, 215
El Paso, Texas (J.M. Hanks)



Henry is a junior who's still searching for his first career catch. Coaches say he is finally in a position where he's

seriously competing for playing time, but that he's still learning and needs to work on his consistency. Henry said he felt a confidence boost toward the end of last season, something that carried over to the spring.

[67] Jacob Hickman

Sr., Offensive guard, 6-4, 295
Bakersfield, Calif. (Centennial)



Hickman has 23 career starts, making him Nebraska's most-experienced offensive lineman. He had 13 starts at center last season

but moved during spring practices to right guard, a position that had been concerning coaches with the loss of Matt Slauson. Hickman has game experience at both right guard and left guard. He's a two-time honorable mention All-Big 12 selection.

[80] Ryan Hill

So., Tight end, 6-3, 250
Arvada, Colo. (West)



Hill is part of a deep and talented tight end corps. He played in 13 games as a true freshman and had three receptions

for 9 yards, playing as the Huskers' No. 3 tight end behind Mike McNeill and Dreu Young. Hill had one touchdown, against Baylor.

[35] Matt Holt

So., Linebacker, 6-0, 200
Lee's Summit, Mo. (West)



Holt was among several walk-on linebackers who stepped up last season and contributed in emergency situations. As a true

freshman, he was forced into action at the start of Big 12 play and had three tackles against Missouri and eight against Texas Tech. However, he missed the last month of the season with a shoulder injury.

[18] Menelik Holt

Sr., Wide receiver, 6-4, 220
San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)



Holt had a breakthrough season as a junior, when he caught 30 passes for 355 yards.

The senior will now need to take things a step further, as Nebraska must replace its top two receivers from 2008. Holt was slowed by injury the latter part of last season but had four games with five or more catches. He had one touchdown.

[73] D.J. Jones

Jr., Offensive guard, 6-5, 315
Omaha, Neb. (Central)



Jones is among eight returning lettermen along the offensive line, but he saw action in only two games last season. That

figures to change this fall, as Nebraska is replacing the right side of its line. Jones began the spring sharing snaps with Ricky Henry at right guard, but when coaches moved Jacob Hickman to that position, Jones began seeing more snaps at left tackle.

[78] Marcel Jones

So., Offensive tackle, 6-7, 310
Phoenix (Trevor Browne)



Looks to be a safe bet to hold down the starting job at right tackle. Has worked hard to add muscle to his frame.

Jones started last season's opener with Lydon Murtha injured and also played nearly the entire game at Kansas State when both Murtha and Jaivorio Burkes were sidelined. A gifted athlete, he was the starting center for his high school basketball team.

[54] Colton Koehler

Sr., Linebacker, 6-1, 230
Harvard, Neb.



A 2006 Nebraska Wesleyan transfer, Koehler is regarded as a favorite to start at middle linebacker in 2009. He played in

seven games last season, including five of the final six. His best effort statistically (eight tackles) came at Kansas State. He started one game -- the Gator Bowl. Linebackers coach Mike Ekeler nicknamed the walk-on "Farmdog."

[44] Micah Kreikemeier

RFr., Linebacker, 6-3, 215
West Point, Neb. (Central Catholic)



Kreikemeier made a big hit on the first series of the Red-White Spring Game, smacking I-back Quentin Castille for a 3-yard loss.

NU fans may remember that Kreikemeier drew a scholarship offer from Tom Osborne about 15 minutes after Osborne announced Pelini as head coach on Dec. 2, 2007. He's in the mix for playing time at the Buck linebacker spot. His father, Keith, was a Husker walk-on player from 1981-83.

[20] Adi Kunalic

Jr., Place-kicker, 6-0, 190
Fort Worth, Texas (North Crowley)



Kunalic has been a dependable weapon on kickoffs, booting more than 50 touchbacks over the past two seasons.

His booming kickoffs over the past two seasons essentially have negated the impact of kickoffs being moved back to the 30-yard line. He has produced touchbacks on 39 percent of his career kickoffs, going 28-for-81 last season as NU ranked fifth nationally in touchbacks.

[40] Blake Lawrence

Jr., Linebacker, 6-3, 220
Shawnee Mission, Kan. (West)



A battle-tested and versatile veteran who will compete for a starting job in 2009, most likely at WILL linebacker,

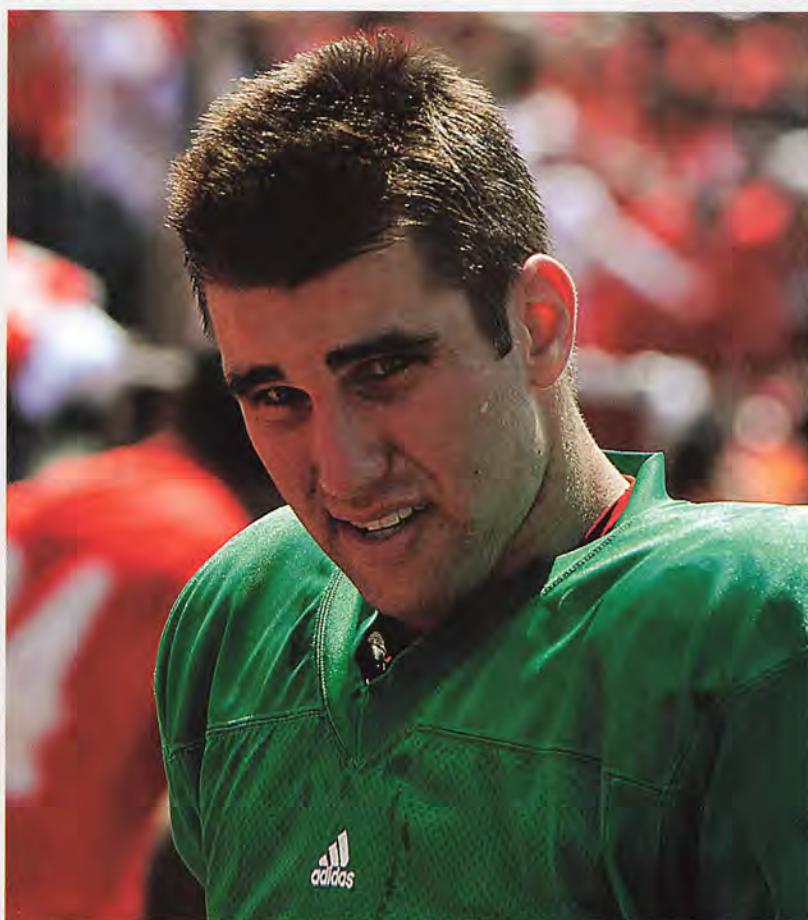
although he ran into a setback in the final stages of spring drills when he suffered a concussion -- his third in 12 months. He played in 10 games last season, but saw his most extensive action in the season's final three games, including starts against Kansas State and Clemson. He finished the season with 21 total tackles.



[31] Zac Lee

Jr., Quarterback, 6-2, 210
San Francisco (St. Ignatius/
San Fran. CC)

Lee appears to be a lock to replace Joe Ganz as starting quarterback. Lee capped a strong spring by completing 15 of 18 passes for 214 yards and three touchdowns, with no interceptions, in the Red-White Spring Game. Lee possesses a strong right (throwing) arm and has excellent speed -- probably a step faster than Ganz. Perhaps Lee's biggest advantage over Nebraska's other quarterbacks is his strong grasp of Shawn Watson's offensive system. "I sat Zac down this spring and said we have three (other) guys learning the system," Watson said. "Two of them (true freshman Cody Green and converted linebacker Latravis Washington) haven't been in it. One of them (injured redshirt freshman Kody Spano) has been it only briefly and just knows the terminology, but doesn't know the system in detail. So, I told Zac, 'Your push has to come from me, and I'm going to coach you hard. And I'm doing this because it's what's best for the team, and it's also what's best for you. I'm doing it because I really care about what you become.' He took that challenge, and he's really letting me coach him hard."



[36] Mathew May

So., Linebacker, 6-1, 210
Imperial, Neb. (Chase County)



May, a walk-on, ended spring practice with a first-team role in both the base and nickel defenses. He actually began last season as a 195-pound safety before moving to linebacker during the week of the 11th game, at Kansas State, where he made three tackles. Defensive coordinator Carl Pelini said May plays with a fearlessness and carries himself well enough to play middle linebacker, which he does occasionally. In fact, Pelini describes May as being a "violent hitter."

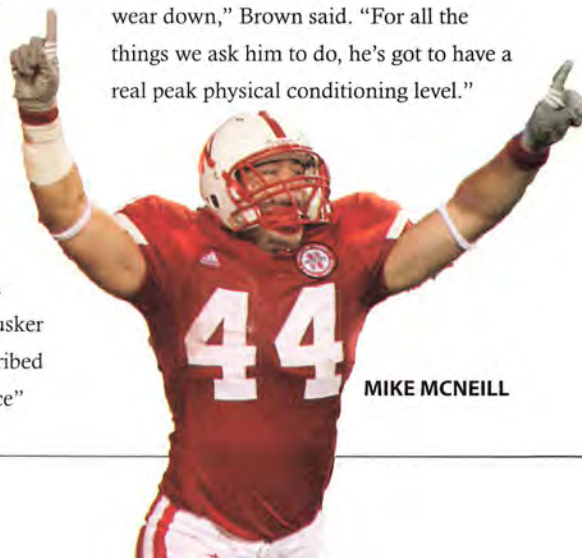
[44] Mike McNeill

Jr., Tight end, 6-4, 240
Kirkwood, Mo.



McNeill finished as the team's third-leading receiver as a sophomore (32 receptions for 442 yards and six TDs) and set a school season record for receptions by a tight end. His receptions total topped the 31 catches by Johnny Mitchell in 1991, and McNeill's six TDs were only one shy of Mitchell's season record. He played in eight games as a redshirt freshman on a team loaded with veteran TEs. Husker tight ends coach Ron Brown described McNeill as a "a good moving piece"

with very good skills. To become a more complete tight end, Brown said, McNeill needs to improve his blocking while also keeping up his weight. McNeill shed too many pounds during last season - "in double figures," Brown said. "He's a strong kid, but when you lose weight during the season, you begin to really wear down," Brown said. "For all the things we ask him to do, he's got to have a real peak physical conditioning level."



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[32] Marcus Mendoza

So., Wide receiver, 5-10, 185
Houston (Spring Woods)



Mendoza came to Nebraska as a running back but dabbled as a wide receiver last season before moving to the position full

time in spring ball. One of the team's fastest players, Mendoza made three catches for 58 yards, including a 26-yard touchdown reception, in the spring game. Last season he appeared in four games, rushing 15 times for 103 yards and a touchdown while also catching a couple passes.

[96] Cameron Meredith

RFr., Defensive end, 6-4, 265
Santa Ana, Calif. (Mater Dei)



Meredith appeared in the third game last season but was able to successfully petition the Big 12 to count 2008 as a redshirt

season, meaning he still has four years of playing eligibility. Meredith and classmate Josh Williams are expected to provide critical depth behind projected starting defensive ends Barry Turner and Pierre Allen. Meredith was a three-year starter at Mater Dei High School, a traditional prep powerhouse.

[63] Derek Meyer

Sr., Offensive lineman, 6-5, 315
Campbell, Neb. (Silver Lake/K-State)



A transfer from Kansas State, Meyer decided to walk on at Nebraska and sat out last season due to NCAA transfer rules.

He has one season of playing eligibility and could play a prominent role in 2009 as a top backup at either guard or tackle. At K-State, Meyer redshirted as a true freshman, then saw action in the first five games as a redshirt freshman before sustaining a season-ending injury.

[90] Terrence Moore

So., Defensive tackle, 6-3, 285
New Orleans (McDonogh 35)



Moore provides key depth as an interior lineman behind projected starters Ndamukong Suh and Jared Crick. Moore

appeared in seven games in 2008 and recorded eight tackles, including six in the first three games. He made two sacks in Nebraska's season-opening triumph over Western Michigan. Comes from the same high school as former Husker star and NFL All-Pro defensive lineman Neil Smith.

[33] Matt O'Hanlon

Sr., Safety, 5-11, 200
Bellevue (East)



O'Hanlon is expected to again be a key player in Nebraska's secondary. A walk-on, he started the first nine games last

season at free safety, then shared time with classmate Rickey Thenarse over the final few games. In addition to his work in the secondary, O'Hanlon continued to play a crucial role on special teams. He finished third on the team with 52 tackles, including 33 solo stops. He helped preserve the Gator Bowl win with a pass breakup on a third-and-goal play in the final two minutes.

[24] Niles Paul

Jr., Wide receiver, 6-1, 215
Omaha (North)



Paul enjoyed a very good spring before being suspended for the Red-White Game following his April arrest for

suspicion of driving under the influence. This coming season, he's being counted on to boost his overall performance to help make up for the losses of top 2008 wideouts Nate Swift and Todd Peterson. Paul played in all 13 games last season, with four starts, and recorded 23 receptions for 214 yards. He also served as the team's primary kickoff return man, averaging 23.6 yards on 41 returns to rank 11th in the Big 12.

[65] Mike Smith

Jr., Offensive tackle, 6-6, 290
Las Vegas (Palo Verde)



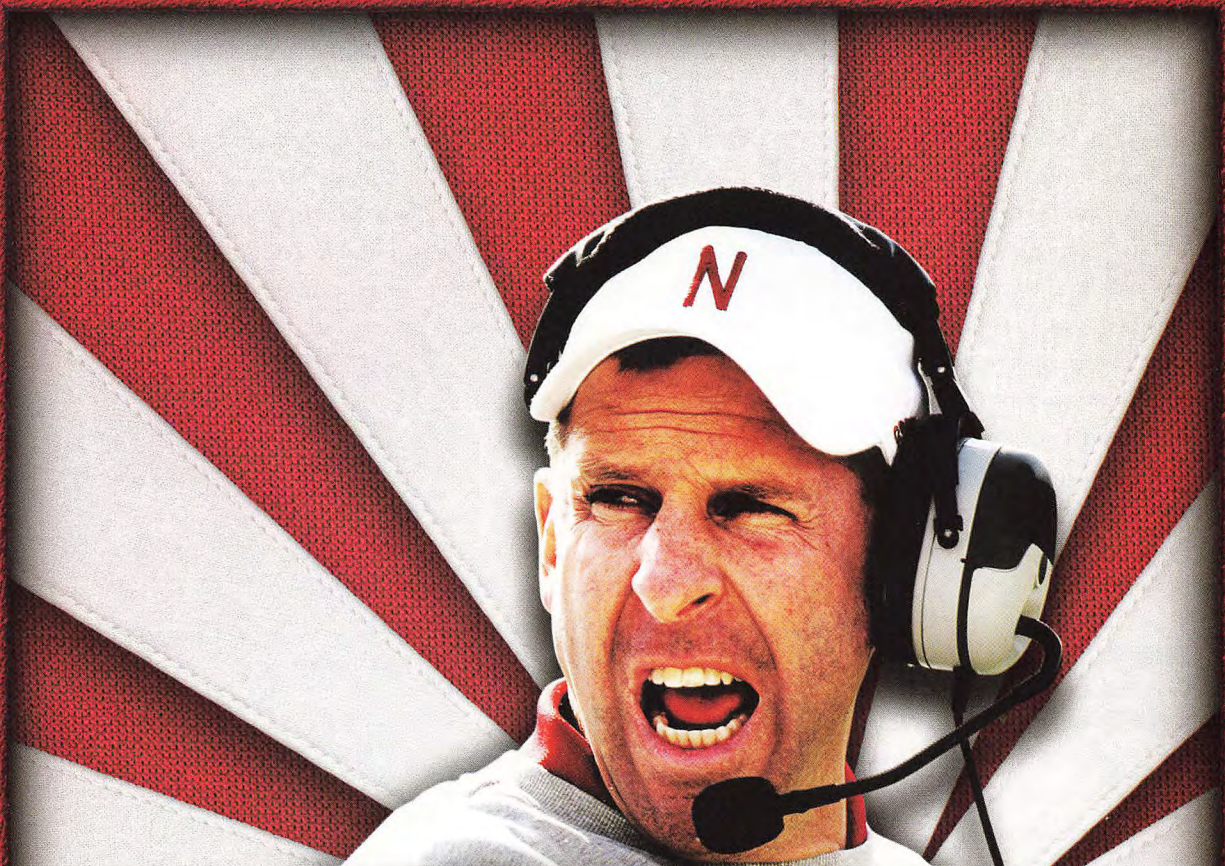
Smith started 12 games at left tackle last season and is among three returning full-time starters along the o-line, joining

Jacob Hickman and Keith Williams. Smith's athleticism allowed him to make an impact off the bench in 2007 as a perimeter blocker, and he's lined up as a tight end in power sets. The first scholarship signee from Nevada in more than 25 years, Smith

began his NU career as a defensive end before switching to offense in the spring of 2007.

MATT O'HANLON





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[13] P.J. Smith

RFr., Safety, 6-2, 205
River Ridge, La. (John Curtis)



Smith received a lot of praise from coaches and teammates throughout the spring, and he capped the 15-practice season with a five-tackle performance in the Red-White Game. Smith was a four-year starter for prep powerhouse John Curtis High, helping the school capture three straight state championships. He earned first-team all-state honors in 2007 and was a member of the Baton Rouge Advocate newspaper's "Super Dozen."

[7] Kody Spano

RFr., Quarterback, 6-2, 215
Stephenville, Texas



Spano suffered a major knee injury in the final week of spring drills but could be ready for the start of preseason camp in August, according to Bo Pelini. Of the quarterbacks on NU's roster, Spano has the second-most experience in Watson's system behind Lee. Spano joined the Husker program in January of 2008, graduating from high school mid-term to get a jump-start on his college career.

[55] Baker Steinkuhler

RFr., Defensive tackle, 6-6, 295
Lincoln (Southwest)



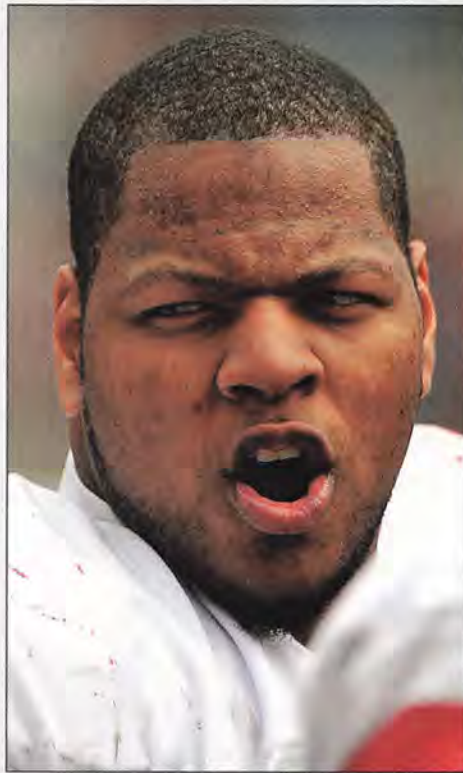
Steinkuhler, the younger brother of former Husker standout DT Ty Steinkuhler, could supply needed depth in the interior d-line to help make up for the key loss of Ty to graduation. The younger Steinkuhler recorded four tackles in the Red-White Game. He was one of the most decorated members of Nebraska's 2008 signing class. The son of 1983 Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award



[93] Ndamukong Suh

Sr., Nose tackle, 6-4, 300
Portland, Ore. (Grant)

Suh emerged as one of the Big 12's dominant forces last season and is expected to anchor the Husker defense in 2009. A first-team All-Big 12 selection by The Associated Press, Suh last season led the team with 76 tackles -- the first Husker lineman to lead the team in tackles since 1973. He had 19 tackles for loss and 7 1/2 sacks. Suh's emergence helped NU finish second in the Big 12 in total defense at 349.8 yards allowed per game, an improvement of 126 yards from the debacle that was the 2007 season. Unusually athletic for a man his size, Suh last season returned two interceptions for touchdowns and often lined up as a fullback in short-yardage situations, even catching a 2-yard touchdown pass against Kansas. Suh considered jumping to the NFL after his junior season. He evidently enjoyed a very strong spring. "We cannot take a play off against him," NU center/guard Jacob Hickman told the Omaha World-Herald after the Red-White Game. "There may be only one or two guys in the entire country who are in the same league with him, so that's a great way for us to get acclimated to the way games will be."



winner Dean Steinkuhler, Baker got off to a relatively slow start in Nebraska's 2008 preseason camp because of illness, but has rebounded nicely by all accounts.



[71] Graham Stoddard

RFr., Linebacker, 6-2, 225
Lincoln (Southwest)



Stoddard, a walk-on, was a two-time honorable mention all-city pick by the *Lincoln Journal Star* newspaper. He earned 2006 all-conference honors after a junior season in which he made 69 tackles, five sacks and two interceptions as a defensive end, helping Southwest to a 10-1 record. He also participated in track and field, running on the Silverhawks' seventh-place 400-meter relay team at the state track meet.

[3] Rickey Thenarse

Sr., Safety, 6-0, 205
Los Angeles (Jordan)



Thenarse has been a special teams standout throughout his college career and emerged late last season as a key contributor

at safety, starting the final four games at free safety. Thenarse will have to continue to play at a high level to be a major contributor at a position that is stocked with talent and experience. He finished last season with 24 tackles, including 17 solo stops and six behind the line of scrimmage (two sacks). A shoulder injury in the opener sidelined him for two games.

[79] Brandon Thompson

RFr., Offensive tackle, 6-6, 300
The Woodlands, Texas



After sitting out last season as a redshirt, Thompson is in position to play a significant role as a backup tackle. At The

Woodlands High, Thompson was ranked among the top 80 players in the Southwest region, according to SuperPrep Magazine. In addition, he was listed among the nation's top 50 offensive tackles by ESPN.com. He was also a standout in the discus and shot put in high school.

[23] Lance Thorell

So., Cornerback, 6-1, 195
Loomis, Neb.



With Nebraska facing a lot of spread offenses last season, Thorell, a walk-on, settled into a significant role in the Huskers' dime

package. He appeared in 11 games, starting five, and finished with 24 tackles, including 15 solo stops. He was second on the team with a career-high eight tackles against New Mexico State, and recorded a career-high five solo stops against Texas Tech.

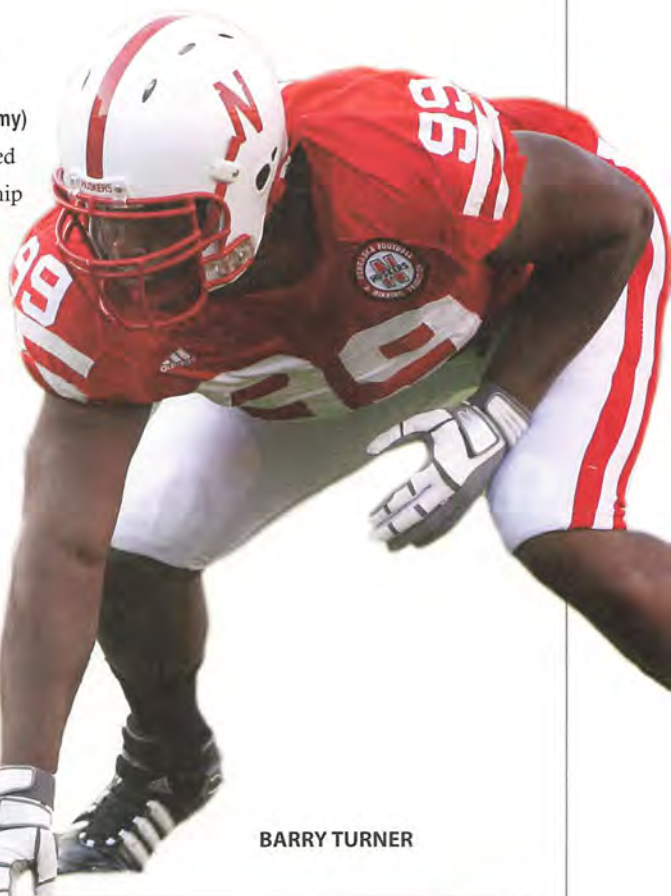
[99] Barry Turner

Sr., Defensive end, 6-3, 265
Antioch, Tenn. (Brentwood Academy)



Turner received a medical hardship after suffering a season-ending broken leg in

last season's second game. In spring practice, Turner showed great acceleration at the snap, but he was still trying to regain his lateral quickness. Turner enters his fifth season in the program with 11.5 career sacks and 18 tackles for loss. He burst onto the scene as a true freshman in 2005, recording a school freshman record six sacks. His sack total tied for the national lead among freshmen.



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[22] Mason Wald

So., Safety, 5-11, 195
Birmingham, Ala. (Vestavia Hills)



Wald was one of only three Nebraska true freshmen to see extensive action last season. With a reputation for being a hard-hitter, Wald was a regular on the punt return and kickoff coverage units. He finished with six tackles, including four solo stops, and made five of his tackles in the final five games of the season. He will compete for playing time in a secondary that features plenty of talent and experience.

[14] Lester Ward

RFr., Running back, 6-3, 215
Brenham, Texas



Ward was particularly impressive in the early part of spring drills, according to running backs coach Tim Beck. The coach said Ward "has a knack for playing the position. He has toughness. He gets through the holes when he needs to. He finds a way to get the job done." In the Red-White Game, Ward carried 10 times for 53 yards, including a 14-yard run. Finished second in the 110 high hurdles at the Texas state track meet as a freshman and sophomore.

[15] Latravis Washington

Jr., Quarterback, 6-3, 225
Bradenton, Fla. (Bayshore)



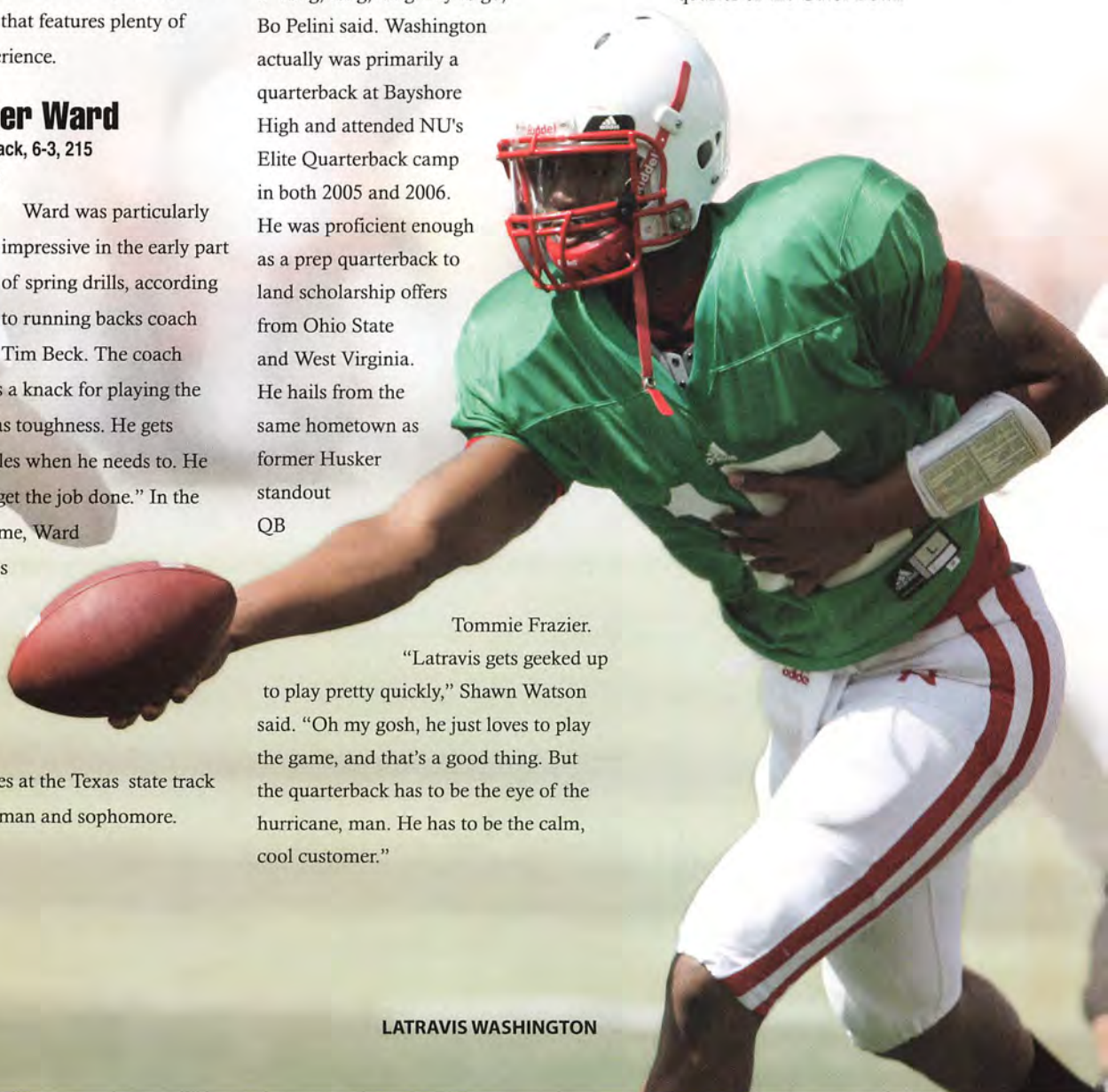
With depth becoming an issue at quarterback, Washington made a key position switch for Nebraska at the start of spring practice after playing linebacker for two seasons. He raised eyebrows with his strong performance in the Red-White Spring Game, completing 13 of 21 passes for 190 yards and two touchdowns. Even so, Washington has a "long, long, long way to go," Bo Pelini said. Washington actually was primarily a quarterback at Bayshore High and attended NU's Elite Quarterback camp in both 2005 and 2006. He was proficient enough as a prep quarterback to land scholarship offers from Ohio State and West Virginia. He hails from the same hometown as former Husker standout QB

[5] Anthony West

Jr., Cornerback, 6-0, 205
San Diego (Point Loma)



West started 11 games in 2008 and helped Nebraska rank second in the Big 12 in passing yards allowed. Holding down the right CB position opposite of senior Armando Murillo, West finished the season with 29 tackles and tied Murillo for the team lead with nine breakups. He made his first career interception in the season-opener, and picked off another pass in the second quarter of the Gator Bowl.



LATRAVIS WASHINGTON

Tommie Frazier.
"Latravis gets geeked up to play pretty quickly," Shawn Watson said. "Oh my gosh, he just loves to play the game, and that's a good thing. But the quarterback has to be the eye of the hurricane, man. He has to be the calm, cool customer."

[45] Alonzo Whaley

RFr., Linebacker, 6-1, 225
Madisonville, Texas



Whaley is in the mix for playing time in 2009, most likely at WILL linebacker. Whaley racked up an eye-popping 162 tackles

during his senior season at Madisonville High, helping his team to a 9-2 record. In addition to his impressive tackle total, Whaley forced eight fumbles, recovered five and scored on an interception return. He recorded 172 tackles as a junior. Was ranked among the top 100 players in the state by Rivals.com.

[17] Josh Williams

RFr., Defensive end, 6-4, 245
Denton, Texas (Ryan)



Williams came on strong midway through spring practice and topped off the spring season with a sack in the Red-White

Game. He added 20 pounds to his frame since joining the program and now is in position to be a key contributor as a backup behind projected starters Pierre Allen and Barry Turner. During his senior season at Ryan High, he made 75 tackles, including 12 sacks, while earning first-team all-district honors in Class 4A.

[68] Keith Williams

Jr., Offensive guard, 6-5, 320
Florissant, Mo. (McClure North)



Williams, the team's biggest player, replaced senior Mike Huff as the starting left guard for the final nine games last

season and is expected to hold down the starting job at LG this coming season. After playing last season at around 305 pounds, Williams added 10-15 pounds of muscle during the winter, just enough

weight to give him a power boost without losing his quickness, according to offensive line coach Barney Cotton. "Keith's a guy you'll allow to get a little bigger, which we've done in the winter time," Cotton told reporters in the late stages of spring drills. "And we've seen so far this spring that that added weight hasn't slowed him down at all. Once you get to 300 pounds, you don't want to sacrifice speed for size. But he's shown that he can handle the extra weight." Williams appeared in 10 games as a redshirt freshman.

[49] Dreu Young

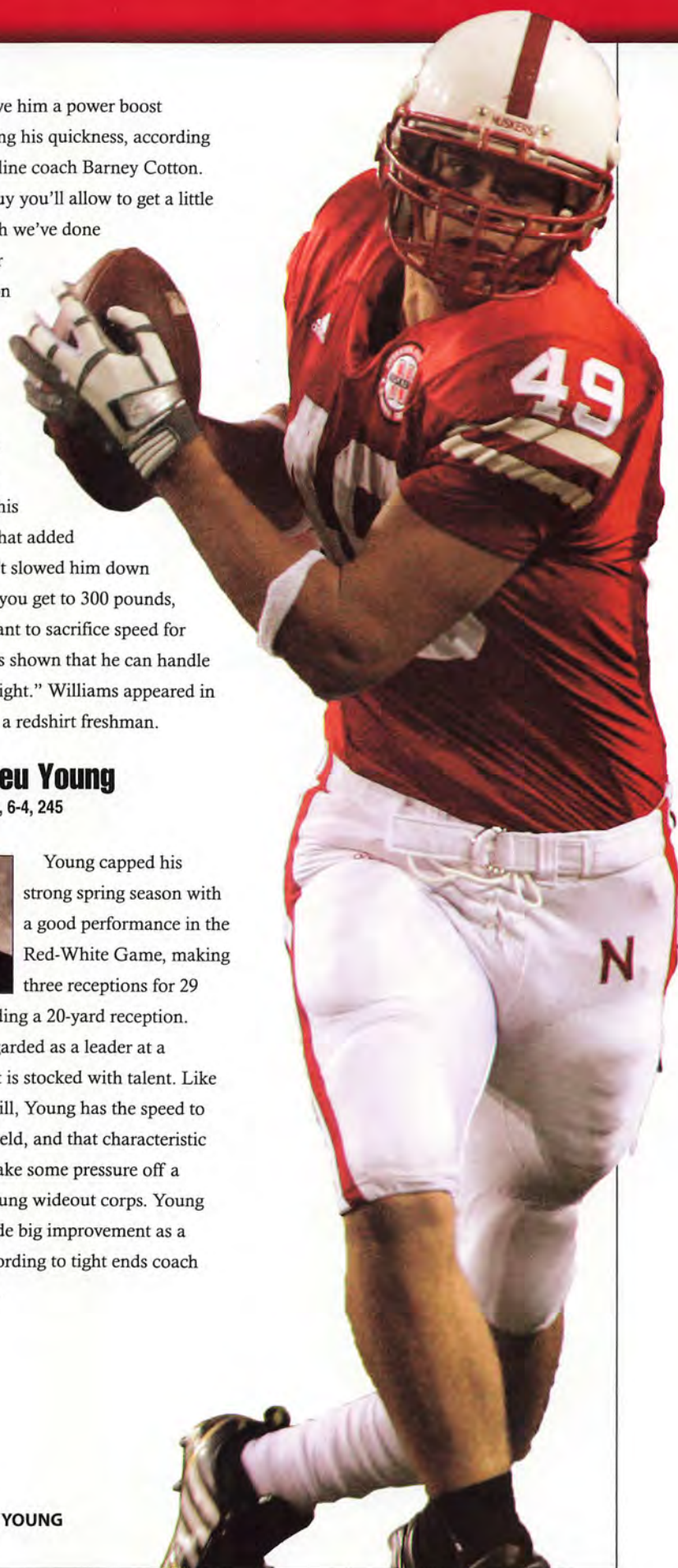
Jr., Tight end, 6-4, 245
Cozad, Neb.



Young capped his strong spring season with a good performance in the Red-White Game, making three receptions for 29

yards, including a 20-yard reception. Young is regarded as a leader at a position that is stocked with talent. Like Mike McNeill, Young has the speed to stretch the field, and that characteristic could help take some pressure off a relatively young wideout corps. Young also has made big improvement as a blocker, according to tight ends coach Ron Brown.

DREU YOUNG

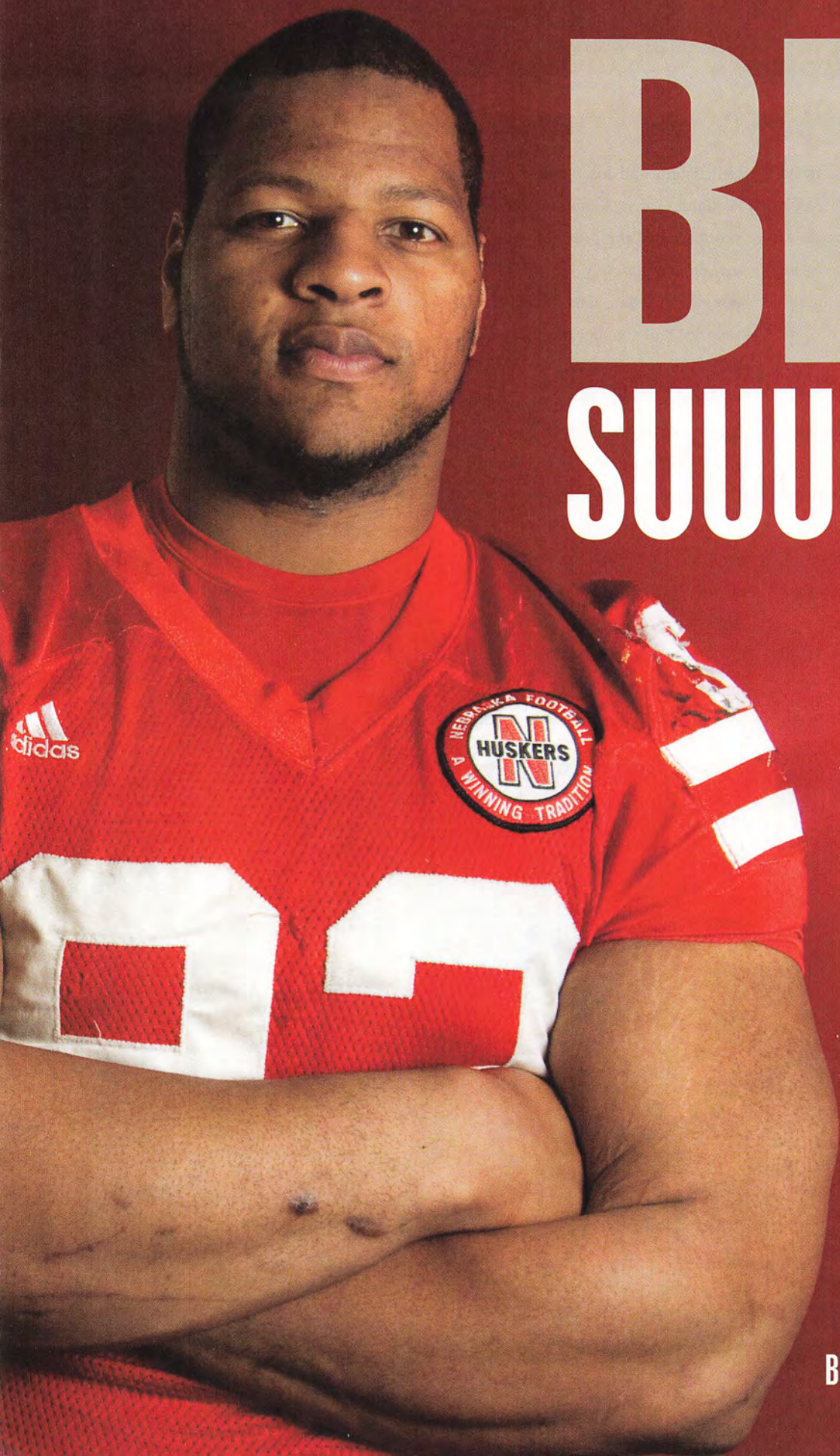


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BIG SUUUUUUH!



BY BRIAN ROSENTHAL

BIG SUUUUUH!

Ndamukong Suh watched the NFL Draft in April, knowing his name could've been, and probably would've been, among those names called in the first two rounds.

Second thoughts?

Hardly.

Suh was simply watching the draft in support of his Husker teammates, some of whom were chosen in the later rounds. He wasn't thinking "what if?" Nor was he holding reservations about deciding to play his senior season at Nebraska.

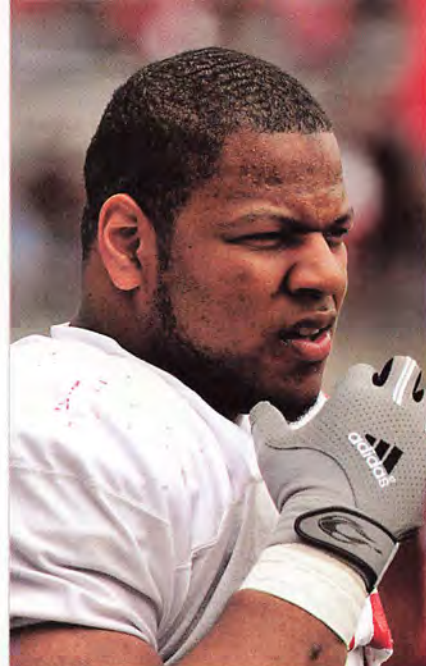
In fact, Suh said he remains "very happy" with his decision.

He's not alone. When Bo Pelini

visited Suh and his family in their Portland, Ore., home in January and discussed the pros and cons of leaving a year early for the NFL, some Nebraska fans may have regarded it, tongue in cheek, as Pelini's biggest recruiting victory.

Not that Nebraska's head coach had to deliver the sales pitch of his life to hang on to "Big Suh," as Pelini affectionately calls his 6-foot-4, 300-pound nose tackle. Suh had been saying all along he'd likely return. He confirmed as much after Pelini's in-home visit.

"School's a huge thing for me and my family. I definitely want to graduate from the University



OUTLAND TROPHY

Nebraska has produced more Outland Trophy winners than any other school, with Dave Rimington earning the trophy as the nation's top collegiate interior lineman twice, the only player to do so. The Cornhuskers' first two Outland winners were defensive linemen.

- Larry Jacobson, DT (1971)
- Rich Glover, MG (1972)
- Dave Rimington, C (1981, 1982)
- Dean Steinkuhler, OG (1983)
- Will Shields, OG (1992)
- Zach Wiegert, OT (1994)
- Aaron Taylor, OG (1997)

Other Outland Trophy finalists

- Jason Peter, DT (1997)
- Dominic Raiola, C (2000)
- Tionu Fonoti, OG (2001)



LOMBARDI AWARD

Four Cornhuskers have earned the Lombardi Award, presented annually to the nation's top collegiate lineman.

- Rich Glover, MG (1972)
- Dave Rimington, C (1982)
- Dean Steinkuhler, OG (1983)
- Grant Wistrom, RE (1997)

Other Lombardi Award finalists

- Rich Glover, MG (1971)
- Larry Jacobson, DT (1971)
- Broderick Thomas, DE (1988)
- Zach Wiegert, OT (1994)
- Jared Tomich, RE (1996)
- Dominic Raiola, C (2000)





of Nebraska," Suh said. "And although the seniors had a great start in pushing this program the right way, I think I can help in pushing it even more in the right direction."

Suh is doing so before even playing a down his senior season. He's becoming a Nebraska household name, garnering the sort of national attention that hasn't come Lincoln's way very often in recent seasons.

ESPN.com, for instance, featured Suh on its Web site during the spring football season. It's the type of exposure that will not only help boost Suh's stock for next year's draft, but boost Pelini's program, as well.

A first-team All-Big 12 Conference selection last season, Suh will vie for bigger honors as a senior. He could become Nebraska's first All-America selection since

"I think you could be talking about a guy who could challenge for the top pick in the whole draft next year if he has a deep senior year. So I mean, can he help himself (by returning his senior year)? Yeah he can definitely help himself by coming back. But he would have probably been a mid to high first rounder from everything I've heard from different scouts, if he had come out this year.

Russ Landy *Draft Expert, The Sporting News
on the Huskers Illustrated Radio Show*

NEBRASKA DEFENSIVE LINEMAN FIRST-ROUND NFL DRAFT PICKS

Larry Jacobson
DT, 1972 (24th)
New York Giants (72-75)

John Dutton
DT, 1974 (5th)
Baltimore Colts (74-87)

Danny Noonan
MG, 1987 (12th)
Dallas Cowboys (87-92)

Neil Smith
DT, 1988 (2nd)
Kansas City Chiefs (88-00)

Grant Wistrom
RE, 1998 (6th)
St. Louis Rams (98-06)

Jason Peter
DT, 1998 (14th)
Carolina Panthers (98-01)

Adam Carriker
DE, 2007 (13th)
St. Louis Rams (07-present)

NEBRASKA DEFENSIVE INTERIOR LINE ALL-AMERICANS

(Since 1964, two-platoon era)

- Walt Barnes, DT (1965)
- Wayne Meylan, MG (1966, 1967)
- Larry Jacobson, DT (1971)
- Rich Glover, MG (1971, 1972)
- John Dutton, DT (1973)
- Mike Fultz, DT (1976)
- Jim Skow, DT (1985)
- Danny Noonan, MG (1986)
- Neil Smith, DT (1987)
- Kenny Walker, DT (1990)
- Jason Peter, DT (1997)

HUSKER ALL-AMERICANS IN JERSEY NO. 93

- Travis Hill, OLB (1992)
- Jared Tomich, OLB (1995-96)

BIG SUUUUUH!



2003, when safety Josh Bullocks and punter Kyle Larson were honored, and the school's first All-America defensive lineman since Grant Wistrom and Jason Peter in 1997.

The possibility for such honors is what, in part, drives Suh.

"I have to go out there and prove it," he said. "It's a great challenge. I love the challenge."

Suh's breakthrough season in 2008, particularly his performance in Nebraska's final four games, helped create the buzz that surrounds him entering 2009. He was the first Nebraska defensive lineman to lead the team in tackles since 1973, and his 76 tackles were the most by a defensive lineman since 1992.

Not many schools likely keep records for interception returns for touchdowns in a season by defensive tackles. Nebraska now does, thanks to Suh, who had two last season. He has three career interceptions, a testament to his athleticism.

"He plays with great technique," Nebraska defensive coordinator and defensive line coach Carl Pelini said. "He's just got tremendous strength. When you've got both those

things, you're going to be a force, and he is."

Clemson coach Dabo Swinney singled out Suh – "big number 93" – following the Gator Bowl, when Suh had eight tackles, including six solo, four tackles for loss, two sacks, and, for good measure, a blocked field goal.

Such accolades only inspired Suh to become better in the off-season. That began during winter conditioning, when Suh said he made "huge gains" in the weight room – benching 465 pounds, squatting 520 and improving his power cleans from 325 to 375.

Suh's overall knowledge of Nebraska's defense also increased, by his own volition. He approached coaches during the winter, wanting to learn more about Pelini's defense – the entire defense. Schemes, coverages, fronts, blitzes. Everything.

"And to me, he didn't do it for any reason (other) than he wants to make himself better and (learn) how he fits into the scheme," Carl Pelini said. "That's the level of thinking you wish everybody had."

Both Carl Pelini and Suh say there's room for improvement in Suh's game. The way Pelini sees it, if Suh didn't think he

could improve, he wouldn't have returned for another season.

"I'd like him to be better with his hands," Carl Pelini said. "I'd like him to really understand how to use offensive blocking schemes against themselves. We asked him to do a lot of that last year toward the end, and he was starting to get it. But with him, I'd like to pick up right where we left off."

Bo Pelini said Suh hasn't yet reached his potential. Then again, few players in college football do, according to Pelini.

"He has high expectations and wants to be the best," Bo Pelini said. "We're lucky to have him back, and his attitude makes him a special player."

"He has tons of room to grow. He's going to be in the NFL for seven or eight years and never reach his potential. There is so much more for him, and not just physically or technique-wise. It's the knowledge and experience you gain from more snaps in the game of football."

For Suh, it's also been a year under the Pelinis. Suh credits them, in their first season returning to Nebraska, for his breakthrough season. Suh appreciated the way the new coaches taught technique, the way they made everything within the defense make sense.

"It was not just them telling me this is the right way to do it," Suh said. "They actually sat down and said this is the way we're doing it, and this is the reason why. Either you deal with it or you don't. So from that aspect, I learned it and comprehended it and kind of made it myself. I made their technique me."

Suh also wants to work on becoming more of a vocal leader. Sure, his ability to tear through offensive lines and wreak havoc in backfields set good examples, but Suh knows there are times where he needs to speak.

"Like Coach Bo said," Suh said, "he kind of wants me to be the face of the program." **N**

SUH'S SIS SHARES IN SUCCESS

Ndamukong Suh's older sister, Ngum, isn't surprised by her brother's success – well, not exactly. "I always expected him to do something," she said, "but never quite this."

"It was more like (he would) do some genius stuff, in math or science."

Ngum has been successful in her own right, playing soccer and earning two degrees at Mississippi State. Now she's a personal trainer for Nike SPARQ, a soccer coach, a fitness model for Sports Unlimited and a modeling technical consultant as well as playing for the Cameroon National Soccer Team and the Portland (Ore.) Rain of the Women's Premier Soccer League.

Huskers Illustrated recently conducted an e-mail interview with Ngum.

HI: Did you give your brother any advice before the photo shoot for the Huskers Illustrated cover?

Ngum: "He thinks he's too cool for my advice! He's been to a few of my photo shoots, so I guess he thinks he's got it down. If I did tell him anything, I'd probably just joke around and tell him to smile with his eyes, like Tyra Banks says on America's Next Top Model or something."

HI: Have you seen your brother play at Nebraska?

Ngum: "I have been to at least one game every year. I enjoy myself every time I'm there eavesdropping on all the fans' conversations about my brother. I try to do something creative every time I visit as well. His sophomore year, I had a replica jersey made with our last name and his number on the back. Last year against Virginia Tech, I made a poster with a Superman sign in front of "UH" mixed in with "Huskers." That was a pretty memorable game because nine students spelled his first name out on their chests and "SUUUUUUUUH" across their backs. I took a picture with them at halftime."

HI: Was he a good soccer player as a youngster?

Ngum: "Yeah, he was a great player. I used to go to all of his games and cheer for him. I'm not sure if he knows but he was my inspiration to start playing. Besides our dad, he was my favorite player to watch that wasn't on TV. I remember a game he played in and he took a corner kick. He set the ball down, waved his hand to signal he was ready and banana-kicked the ball right into the goal! All the parents screamed and cheered. Can you believe my dad had just taught him how to do that either that morning or the day before? He's a phenomenal athlete. Too bad I'm a way better player than he is now (hahaha)!"



Quarterbacks

Turns out, Zac Lee, the clear favorite to win Nebraska's starting quarterback job in the fall, possesses "a little bit of a gunslinger mentality," according to Husker offensive coordinator Shawn Watson.

"There's a lot of that that's really good," the coach said. "He has confidence in his arm, confidence in his ability to pass."

That said, Watson wants to see Lee channel some of that energy. Lee has to know when to check down to a third or fourth option instead of throwing a deep ball or trying to zip a strike into a very small window. Also, Lee tends to leave the pocket a little too quickly at times and rely on his speed.

particular," Watson said at the end of spring drills.

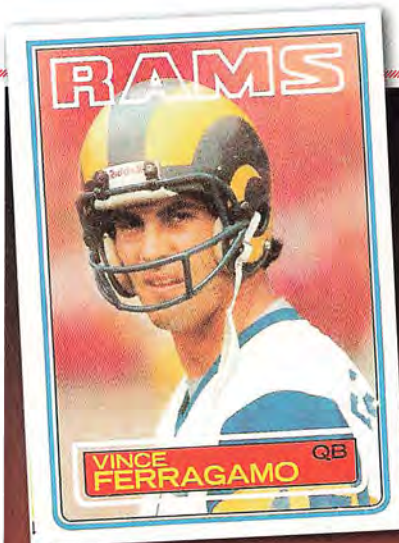
Lee, a 6-foot-2, 210-pound junior from San Francisco, was sharp in the Red-White Game, completing 15-of-18 passes for 214 yards and three touchdowns.

All in all, the Husker quarterbacks enjoyed a good day. Cody Green, the heralded recruit who graduated from Dayton (Texas) High School in December, was 8-for-15 passing for 81 yards. Junior Latravis Washington, a converted linebacker, was 13-for-21 for 190 yards and two touchdowns.

Redshirted freshman Kody Spano suffered a knee injury in the final week of spring practice and sat out the Red-White Game, though coach Bo Pelini said Spano could return in time for the start of pre-season drills in August.

Make no mistake, Lee has the inside track on the starting job. However, if Nebraska's first game were tomorrow, Watson said he would have confidence in his back-ups.

"I think we'd have to narrow the scope of our offense," the coach said. "My goal is to get the base concepts taught to them. The way our offense is built, we have foundations, basic reads. There are things a quarterback has to grow into. I just have to give them the



HUSKER GREAT

Vince Ferragamo
(1977-86)

Ferragamo, who transferred to Nebraska from California and left as a fourth-round draft pick, was the Los Angeles Rams' quarterback in Super Bowl XV. His best season was the next, 1980, in which he completed 240-of-404 passes for 3,199 yards and 30 touchdowns with 19 interceptions.

RISEING STAR

Cody Green
6-4, 220, Dayton, Texas

Green went through spring practice, completing 8-of-15 passes for 81 yards in the Red-White game. As a high school senior, he passed for

3,265 yards and 37 touchdowns and rushed for 1,610 yards and 25 touchdowns to lead his team to the state 4A championship game.



"I'm really proud of him because he has shown enormous improvement in those areas, in the last three weeks in



2

*Passes Zac Lee
has thrown as
a Husker.*

basic stuff.

"As for Zac, he's way beyond that. He's doing it all right now."

Lee appeared in two games last season and completed 1-of-2 passes while rush-

a 10-2 record and an appearance in the California junior college title game.

Watson makes it clear that the starting job is Lee's to lose.

"I sat Zac down (this spring) and said

we have three guys learning the system," Watson said.

"Two of them (Green and Latravis Washington) haven't been

in it. One of them (Spano) has been in it only briefly and just knows the terminology, but doesn't know the (offense) in detail."

"So I told Zac, 'Your push has to come from me, and I'm going to coach you hard. And I'm doing this because it's what's best for the team, and it's also what's best for you. I'm doing it because I really care about what you become.'

"He took the challenge, and he's really letting me coach him hard."

by Steve Sipple

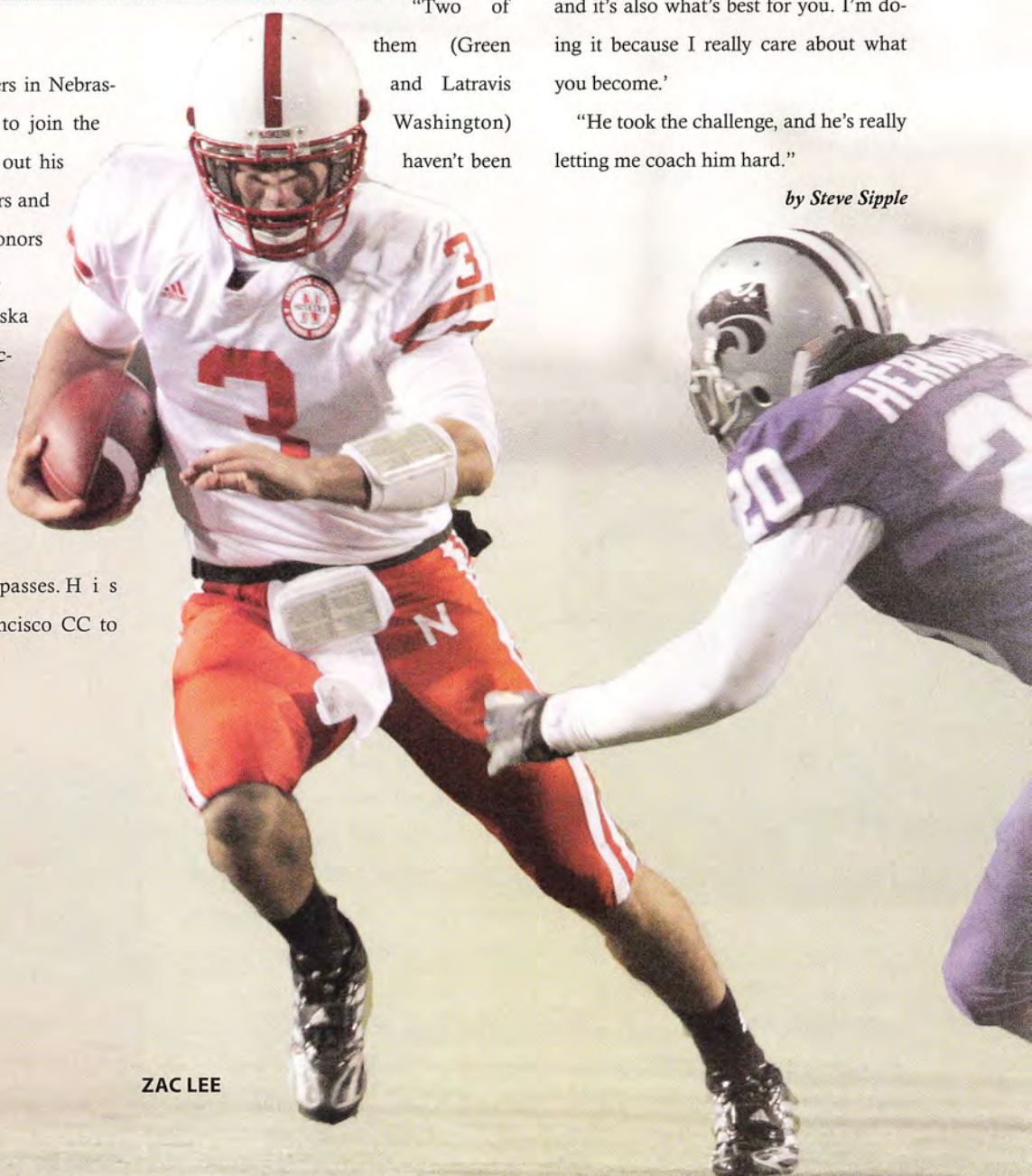
"There are things a quarterback has to grow into. I just have to give them the basic stuff. As for Zac, he's way beyond that. He's doing it all right now."

SEAN WATSON on ZAC LEE

ing twice for 17 yards.

He was one of six players in Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class to join the team that January. He sat out his first season with the Huskers and earned scout team MVP honors for his work at quarterback.

Lee arrived at Nebraska following a highly successful 2006 season at San Francisco City College. He threw for more than 3,400 yards and 35 touchdowns while completing 64 percent of his passes. His performance led San Francisco CC to



ZAC LEE

Offensive Line

Mission accomplished, or at least the first phase. Barney Cotton came away from spring practice with a good idea of which offensive linemen belong on the two-deeps.

The second phase, settling on starters, probably won't conclude until a week before the opening game. The evaluation will continue through pre-season practice, according to Cotton.

Right guard will be a focus of that evaluation, specifically whether senior Jacob Hickman will line up there or at center, where he started last season. Hickman began spring drills at center but a couple of weeks in moved to right guard, with sophomore Mike Caputo

right guard. Juniors Ricky Henry and D.J. Jones began the spring competing at the position, but Jones subsequently moved to tackle – where he seems a better fit.

Hickman started nine games at left guard as a sophomore, and one game at tackle as a true freshman. He has proven himself the most versatile of the lineman. “He’s also the smartest guy we have up front,” said Cotton. “He’s one of the smartest linemen I’ve ever been around.

“I’m not so sure he doesn’t know what all 11 guys are doing sometimes. He can read a defense, and he can help the guys next to him. And he kind of points us in the right direction.”

Keith Williams, who calls him “Hick,” considers Hickman “the brains of the offense.” He’s also “the leader of the group,” said Williams, the returning starter at left guard.

Williams has taken leadership responsibilities, too, “by default, I guess. I’m not really a vocal leader. I just kind of lead by my actions,” he said. “We’re (offensive linemen) supposed to be the most dominant people on the field. We’re supposed to be the ones that lead the team.”

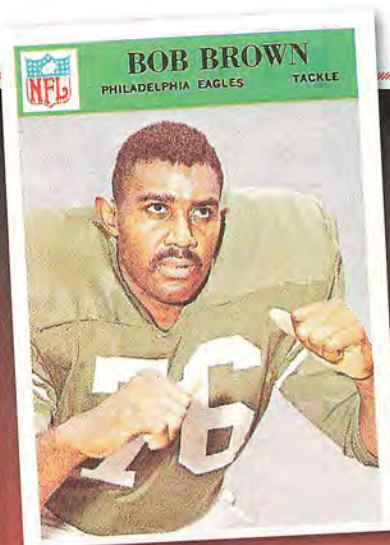
Mike Smith, the returning starter at left tackle, also “just kind of leads by action,” Williams said. “On the field,



MIKE CAPUTO

moving up to the No. 1 center.

The change reflected Caputo's play as well as concern about identifying a clear-cut successor to Matt Slauson at



HUSKER GREAT

Bob Brown
(1964-1973)

Brown and Guy Chamberlin are the only former Cornhuskers in both the pro and college football halls of fame. The second player selected in the 1964 NFL draft, Brown was a six-time Pro Bowl selection and a five-time, first-team All-Pro honoree. He played in 126 games, including 110 starts, for the Eagles, Rams and Raiders.

RIISING STAR

Brent Qvale
6-7, 335, Williston, N.D.

One of four scholarship freshman offensive linemen, Qvale, the biggest member of the class, was North Dakota's Gatorade Player of the Year as a high school senior and a three-



time all-state offensive tackle, as well as a 4.0 student. He picked the Cornhuskers over Wisconsin and Iowa.

*Combined
career starts on
offensive line,
not counting
Jaivorio
Burkes (7).*

he's sort of like me, kind of laid-back, relaxed."

Smith has gained weight since last season, and "you can tell the difference, especially when we work together on double-teams and stuff like that. He really brings it," said Williams. "I don't

Brandon Thompson, senior Derek Meyer, a transfer from Kansas State, and D.J. Jones also in the mix at tackle.

Sixth-year senior Andy Christensen, who returned last season after being suspended for an off-the-field situation but didn't play, is in the mix at guard,

along with Henry, Williams — who, at season's end "was playing as well as anybody," according to Cotton — and Hickman.

Christensen has nine starts during his injury-plagued career.

Oh yes, Meyer also could play guard.

Versatility is important, particularly with the veterans. "I expect Keith (Williams) better be able to play both guards. Mike Smith better be able to play maybe tackle and center. And Hickman can play center and guard," said Cotton.

"Those guys have to be multi-role guys."

Hickman has shown he can be that. He's versatile and smart.

And he cares. "My respect for him grows because the longer I've been around him, you get the feeling about how much he cares about things," Cotton said. "He really does care about this team."

by Mike Babcock

"I'm not so sure he doesn't know what all 11 guys are doing sometimes. He can read a defense, and he can help the guys next to him. And he kind of points us in the right direction."

COACH BARNEY COTTON on JACOB HICKMAN

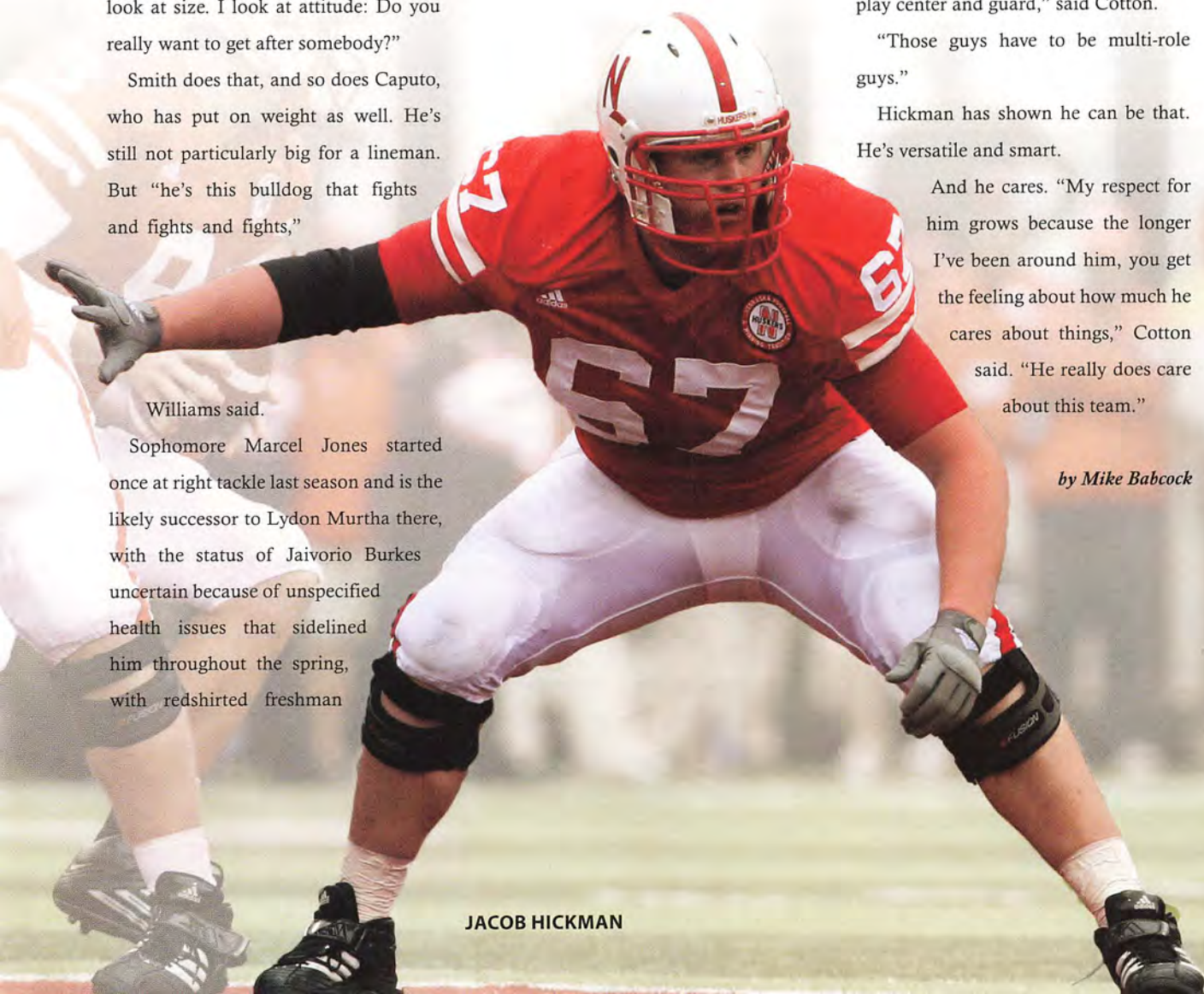
look at size. I look at attitude: Do you really want to get after somebody?"

Smith does that, and so does Caputo, who has put on weight as well. He's still not particularly big for a lineman. But "he's this bulldog that fights and fights and fights,"

Williams said.

Sophomore Marcel Jones started once at right tackle last season and is the likely successor to Lydon Murtha there, with the status of Jaivorio Burkes uncertain because of unspecified health issues that sidelined him throughout the spring, with redshirted freshman

JACOB HICKMAN



Running backs

Junior running back Roy Helu Jr. missed the last week of spring practice with an injured hamstring and sat out the Red-White Spring Game.

But make no mistake, Helu made an impression on teammates and coaches during the previous three weeks of spring drills.

"He looked really good," running backs coach Tim Beck said, noting Helu's winter weight gain – he added about 15 pounds – only enhanced his explosiveness and elusiveness.

"Arm tackles and things like that, not only can he elude people with his change of direction and cutting ability,

practices but happy that young running backs like Austin Jones, Collins Okafor and Lester Ward benefited from increased repetition in Helu's absence.

"We really needed that," Beck said.

Of course, there's still junior Quentin Castille, who ran for a career-best 125 yards in the Huskers' 26-21 Gator Bowl victory over Clemson.

"As long as he continues to stay focused and works to improve, he's proven he can do what we need him to do, for sure," Beck said of Castille.

Meanwhile, Ward, 6-3, 215-pound redshirted freshman, was particularly impressive in the early part of spring drills, according to Beck, who also offered praise for Okafor and Jones.

"I'd say of that group right now, I'm probably most pleased with Lester," Beck said early in the spring. "Lester Ward's probably been the most pleasantly surprising."

Beck said Ward "has a knack for playing the position. He has toughness. He gets through the holes when he needs to. He finds a way to get the job done right now. To me, that's why he's probably standing out a little more. Whether he knows the offense any better than those other guys, he seems to be more productive for some reason or another right now."

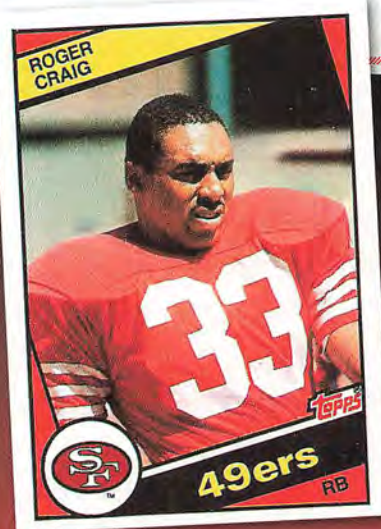
Said Castille: "He's a tall runner.



ROY HELU JR.

but now he's able to run through them and run over them," Beck said.

Beck was disappointed the 6-foot, 220-pound Helu had to sit out some



HUSKER GREAT

Roger Craig
(1983-93)

Craig was the definitive back in San Francisco's West Coast offense, the first player in NFL history to rush for 1,000 yards and have 1,000 receiving yards in the same season, 1985. He played for three 49er Super Bowl champions, scoring a record three touchdowns in Super Bowl XIX.

RISING STAR

Rex Burkhead
5-11, 200, Plano, Texas

The versatile Burkhead was the Dallas Morning News All-Area Offensive Player of the Year as a senior, after rushing for 1,762 yards and 28 touchdowns and catching 42 passes for 594 yards and five touchdowns. He also returned punts and kickoffs.



15

Pounds Roy Helu, Jr. has put on since last season.

Coaches want him to get his pads down a little bit. Other than that, when he goes through holes and things like that, he's like a little wiggler. He gets through anything. You don't think he can get through it, but he'll get through it."

Ward rushed 10 times for 53 yards

sophomore walk-on from Aurora, Colo., carried 12 times for 38 yards.

"They're still learning (the offense), all those guys," Beck said.

With the experience of Helu and Castille, the goal this spring, Beck said, was to groom a third running

experience.

"I think we've made strides in doing that," Beck said. "I don't know if (the younger backs) have arrived, but they're certainly a lot closer than they were at the beginning."

This summer incoming freshmen Rex Burkhead and Dontrayevous Robinson join the fray.

"Of those guys, I think you see Rex as being more like Roy and Tray being more like Q," Beck said.

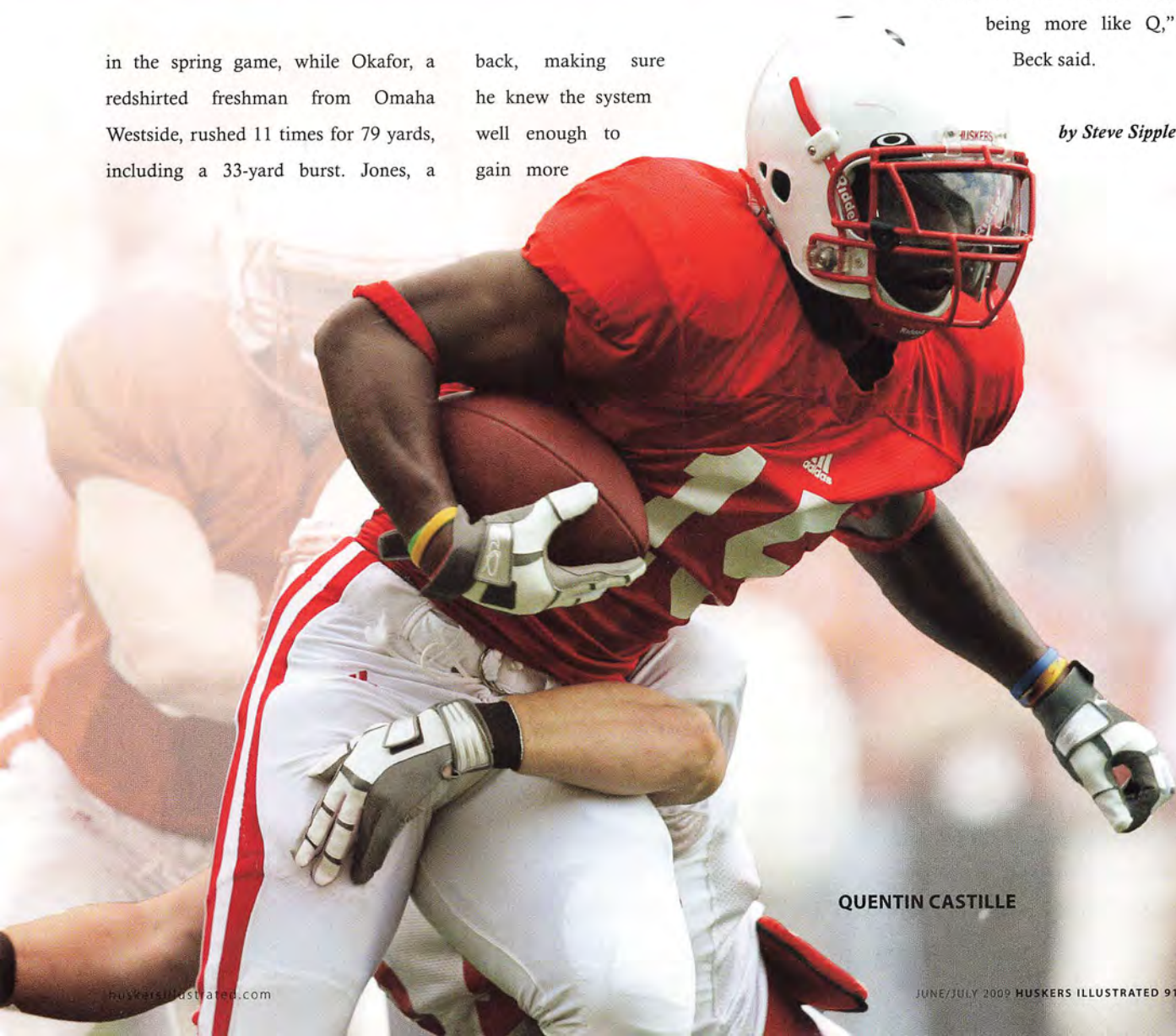
by Steve Sipple

"Arm tackles and things like that, not only can he elude people with his change of direction and cutting ability, but now he's able to run through them and over them."

TIM BECK on ROY HELU JR.

in the spring game, while Okafor, a redshirted freshman from Omaha Westside, rushed 11 times for 79 yards, including a 33-yard burst. Jones, a

back, making sure he knew the system well enough to gain more



QUENTIN CASTILLE

Wide Receivers

The situation is similar to that of a year ago. Wide receivers coach Ted Gilmore was looking to replace Maurice Purify and Terrence Nunn, who had combined to catch 92 passes for 1,266 yards and 10 touchdowns.

The candidates included Nate Swift and Todd Peterson. "They had a lot of reps, but they hadn't been every-down players for some time, and it was a situation where guys had to demonstrate they could be an every-down player," Gilmore said near the end of spring practice.

"I had the same question marks: What's going to happen at the receiver position?"

1,727 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Now Gilmore is looking to replace Swift and Peterson.

He has plenty of candidates, 14 during the spring. Plus Khiry Cooper, who was playing baseball, and junior college transfer Brandon Kinnie will join the competition in fall camp.

The numbers really aren't a problem. "Our rotation, typically, and those are the guys we travel with, has been six to eight," said Gilmore. "If I'm fortunate enough to take eight on the road, they must have a role on special teams. But I would like to be able to play six guys freely.

"I'd love to have that problem. It means regardless of who's in there, you don't have a drop-off. We're trying to get that kind of depth, that we can roll guys, always have fresh legs in there, have guys pushing off the ball and giving us tremendous effort."

Senior Menelik Holt has been in the rotation, with four starts when the Cornhuskers opened with three wide receivers. Holt was fourth on the team in receptions last season, with 30 for 355 yards and one touchdown. His focus during the spring was to encourage the young receivers.

"I always want to try to make big plays, but I was more worried about



HUSKER GREAT

Irving Fryar
(1984-2000)

Fryar was the first player selected in the 1984 NFL draft, by the New England Patriots, one of four teams for which he played, 255 games, including 206 starts. His most productive seasons were 1996 and 1997, when he caught a combined 174 passes for 2,511 yards and 17 touchdowns. He played in five Pro Bowls.

RISEING STAR

Antonio Bell
6-2, 180, Daytona Beach, Texas

Bell enrolled at mid-year and participated in spring practice, impressing with his speed. Based on

his play during the spring, he could contribute immediately, not only as a receiver but also by returning punts and/or kickoffs,

which he did in the Red-White Spring Game.



CHRIS BROOKS

What happened was Swift and Peterson stepped up, and not only did they step up, they exceeded the numbers of Purify and Nunn: 125 receptions,

6

*Realistic
number of
game-day wide
receivers.*

trying to get some of the younger guys (to come) along because when any of us goes down, we're going to need them," Holt said. "We don't want there to be some huge drop-off when they go in the game.

"It's a process that takes time. You

and Wes Cammack; junior Will Henry; sophomores Curenski Gilleylen and Marcus Mendoza, who moved from I-back; and freshman Antonio Bell, as well as several redshirted freshmen, among them scholarship recruits Tim Marlowe and Steven Osborne.

with how many receivers we use – sometimes we use three, four, and sometimes we even use five – that's a lot of guys on the field.

"If you make plays and continue to prove yourself, Coach is going to find a spot for you."

That was Gilmore's message a year ago, following the loss of Purify and Nunn.

Some, like Holt, have played. "The difference is, an every-down guy is demonstrating in every situation, every circumstance, that he can make that play," Gilmore said. "And you've got to have not only the mental make-up but the work ethic. Play-one has got to be the same as play-70.

"Nate and Todd were two of the best when it comes to that."

by Mike Babcock

"I always want to try to make big plays, but I was more worried about trying to get some of the younger guys (to come) along because when any of us goes down, we're going to need them."

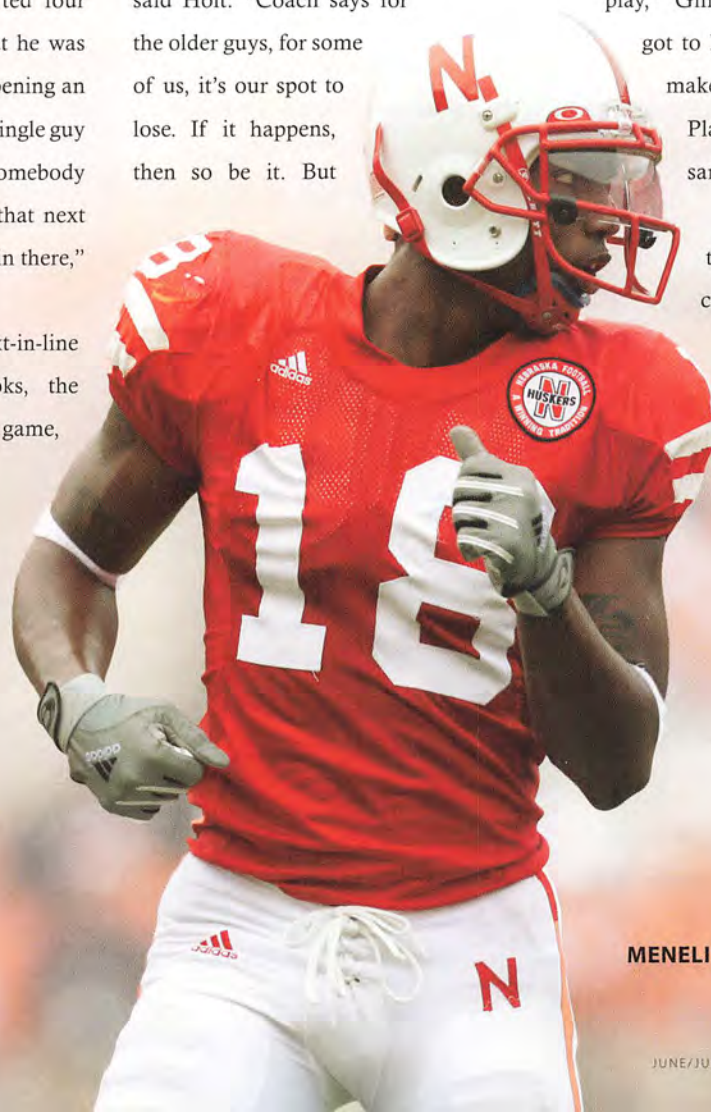
SENIOR MENELIK HOLT on encouraging young receivers during spring practices

can't really push it."

Junior Niles Paul also started four times in three-receiver sets. But he was suspended late in the spring, opening an opportunity for others. "Every single guy is always a rep away, and if somebody can't go for whatever reason, that next guy has got to be ready to step in there," Gilmore said.

The lengthy list of next-in-line includes seniors Chris Brooks, the leading receiver in the spring game,

"Everyone has an opportunity, really," said Holt. "Coach says for the older guys, for some of us, it's our spot to lose. If it happens, then so be it. But



MENELIK HOLT

Tight Ends

Used to be an opposing defense could anticipate what a Nebraska tight end might do based on which tight end was in the game. Some were receivers. And some were blockers.

Cornhusker tight ends coach Ron Brown offered an example from the early 1990s – the tandem of Johnny Mitchell and William Washington. Both weighed about 260 pounds, Brown said, “but they were completely different guys.” Washington “was a tremendous edge-blocker,” while Mitchell was a “great down-the-field guy, (pass) catcher. That was a great combination.

“But it was a predictable combination.”



DREU YOUNG

Such is not the case nowadays. Nebraska's tight ends are “hybrids,” said Brown. “I say, ‘You have to be a jack of all trades and a master of all of them.

That's the guy who's going to play.’ ”

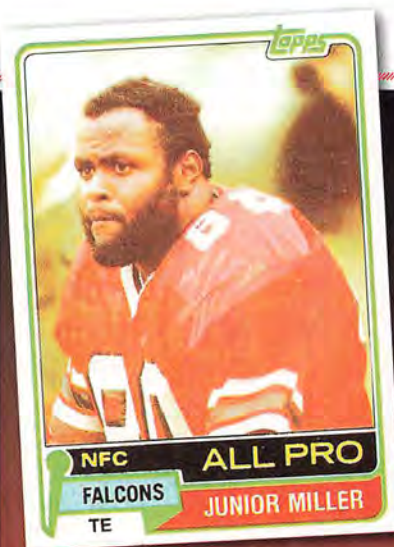
If a tight end can't block as well as run routes and catch, he won't be on the field much, if at all.

Back in the day, Brown coached tight ends, wingbacks and wide receivers. Now he only coaches tight ends. “You've got to give them attention because they're the most neglected position in college football,” he said. “They're shuffling all around. So it's good to have a tight end coach because (of) what you ask them to do, because of the way we use them, as run blockers and split receivers.”

In addition, the Cornhuskers use more tight ends now, two and even three in the game at the same time. They're identified by letters of the alphabet, “U” and “Y,” as well as by distinctive names such as “zebra” and “rocket.” Sometimes they'll even line up at fullback.

“They've mixed us around at different positions,” said junior Mike McNeill, the team's top returning receiver, with 32 catches for 442 yards and six touchdowns last season.

McNeill knows about moving around. When two tight ends are in the game, and lined up on the same side of the ball, he's likely to be the one setting up off the line of scrimmage like a wide receiver. That allows him to “get a better



HUSKER GREAT

Junior Miller
(1980-84)

Miller was the seventh player selected in the 1980 NFL draft. His professional career was brief but distinguished. He caught 122 passes for 1,409 yards and 14 touchdowns and played in two Pro Bowls. His most productive season was as a Falcons rookie – 46 catches for 584 yards and nine touchdowns.

RIISING STAR

J.T. Kerr
6-4, 230, San Diego, Calif.

Despite the depth at tight end, Kerr will have an opportunity to prove himself in fall camp, according to tight ends coach Ron Brown. Rivals.com ranked him among the top 75 players in California

even though he was hampered by injury his senior season in high school.



32

Mike
McNeill's
catches in
2008, tops
among
returnees.

free release, so I like it," he said.

"I mean, I get to move more in space."

His receiving ability doesn't preclude his having to block, however. And he has improved markedly in that area because of a change in his footwork during spring

afraid to do if everyone's ready to play is use four or five guys in a particular game," he said.

Brown worked with eight tight ends during the spring, among them redshirted freshmen Ben Cotton and Kyler Reed. And freshman J.T. Kerr will join the

don't come in here thinking you're going to redshirt.

"You come in here thinking you're going to play."

McNeill, Young, Hill, Cotton and Reed have redshirted. All of the returning tight ends have, for that matter. But eight isn't necessarily enough.

"I like the situation," said Brown.

"I like competition. I like playing a lot of guys, if they can all play. I like challenging guys."

He'll challenge them to block as well as catch passes, lining up in a variety of ways because in today's game, the tight end "is kind of a moving piece," McNeill said. "We have like five positions we have to learn."

by Mike Babcock

"I say, 'You have to be a jack of all trades and a master of all of them. That's the guy who's going to play.' "

COACH RON BROWN on Nebraska's tight ends

practice.

"I changed my stance, which has helped me a lot," he said. Blocking "all starts with your footwork and your hand placement. It makes all the difference in the world."

Junior Dreu Young also saw significant action last season, with sophomore Ryan Hill the third tight end in the game. But Brown won't necessarily stop at using three tight ends. "The thing I wouldn't be

competition in fall camp.

Kerr could earn his way into the mix. "Most (incoming)

guys end up redshirting,"

Brown said.

"But that's the last resort. You

MIKE MCNEIL

Linebackers

Mike Ekeler doesn't want to hear how young Nebraska's linebackers will be this fall, no matter how many redshirted freshmen might play.

For the record, that could be as many as four.

"Young is not in our vocabulary," said Ekeler, the Cornhusker linebackers coach. "There will be no excuses. We've got to go out there and we've got to play as good as any linebacker corps in the country.

"It's a young group right now, but in saying that, it's got to become an old group by the time the season starts."

Will Compton, Sean Fisher, Micah

230-pound Fisher are most seriously challenging for starting positions. Compton will battle seniors Colton Koehler and Phillip Dillard at MIKE, and Fisher stands a good chance at starting at BUCK in Nebraska's base defense.

"Sean's consistent," Nebraska junior linebacker Blake Lawrence said. "He knows a lot. He's kind of a student of the game. He's in different roles. He's played MIKE and WILL (in nickel) and BUCK. He's learned it all, and he's been able to apply the techniques from different positions to MIKE or to BUCK, wherever he's at.

"He's a guy that hasn't been talked about much, but he's so consistent. He's developed into a good leader on the field, and he's going to be in some starting spots."

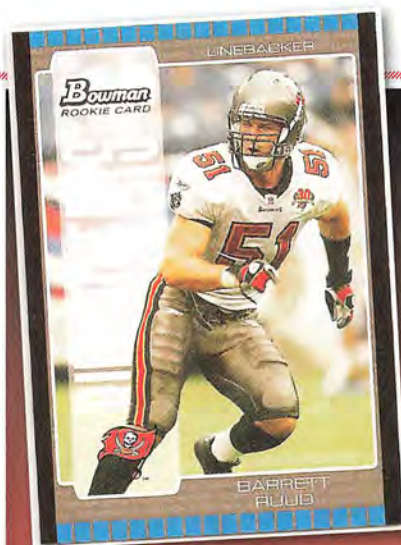
As for Lawrence, a WILL linebacker, he missed the latter part of spring practices with a concussion, his third in 12 months. When healthy, he can play a variety of roles, although his prognosis is uncertain.

"We'll see," Ekeler said. "You don't spend a whole lot of time worrying."

Ekeler is taking the same approach with his linebackers unit. The Huskers return Koehler, a walk-on who played in seven games last season and earned his first start in the Gator Bowl, and



Kreikemeier and Alonzo Whaley are all redshirted freshmen expected to contribute this season. Of those, the 6-foot-2, 220-pound Compton and 6-6,



HUSKER GREAT

Barrett Ruud
(2005-present)

A second-round draft pick, Ruud has established himself among the NFL's top young linebackers, leading the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in tackles each of the last two seasons. He was credited with 178 tackles, including three sacks, in 2008. He has missed only one game since his rookie season, with 31 starts over the past two seasons.

RIISING STAR

Chris Williams
6-0, 230, Abilene, Texas

Even though his senior season in high school was shortened by a knee injury, Williams shared District 3-5A

player-of-the-year honors.

The four-star recruit was credited with 96 tackles, including 62 unassisted and 17 for losses, for a team that reached the 5A playoffs.



4

*Redshirted
freshmen
prominent in
the mix.*

Dillard, who has played in 33 career games. Dillard, though, was listed toward the bottom of the depth chart during the spring.

"He's still in there battling, and things will play themselves out," Ekeler said after the spring game. "He's got a good

safety for the final three games. With Lawrence's status uncertain, May could earn a starting role at WILL. He moved to that position from MIKE about five practices into spring.

"He did a nice job of picking things up," Ekeler said. "He's not an error repeater."

"We've got to go out there and we've got to play as good as any linebacker corps in the country. It's a young group, but in saying that, it's got to become an old group by the time the season starts."

COACH MIKE EKELER on Nebraska linebackers

attitude, and he's working hard."

Another walk-on who emerged last season is Mathew May. The 6-1, 210-pound sophomore from Imperial, Neb., moved to linebacker from

Ekeler said he'd like to see more consistency and mental toughness from the 6-1, 225-pound Whaley.

"He's got to get to the point where he goes out there and it's not OK to make a mistake," Ekeler said, "and he knows that."

As a whole, Nebraska's linebacker unit can't afford to take a step back from the progress it made during the spring, Ekeler said.

"We've got to get better," he said. "They know we can be pretty darned good, but we're not even close to where we want to be."

by Brian Rosenthal



PHILLIP DILLARD

Defensive Ends

Nebraska wasn't supposed to have any returning starters at defensive end for the 2009 season.

Now, the Huskers have two.

If there's ever a bright side to a player suffering a season-ending injury, that's it.

Barry Turner, in the first quarter of Nebraska's second game last season, broke a bone in his leg and underwent season-ending surgery. The senior gained another year of eligibility, and he returns to the starting lineup this fall.

Meanwhile, Pierre Allen, a junior, also returns as a starter. Because of

"You've got to kind of take the silver lining with something like that," defensive ends coach John Papuchis said of Turner's injury and subsequent extra season.

"Having him come back will help, because it will give him a year's more experience, and he's going to continue to thrive in our system."

Turner has 11.5 career sacks, including six his freshman season. He had a 14-yard sack in last year's season-opener.

Papuchis said coaches wanted Turner to "knock some of the rust off" in the spring and work to regain some of his fundamentals and technique.

"I didn't really know (what to expect) going in, because we were going to kind of, each day, take it for what it was and make sure he got enough individual work worked in, get him mixed into the team stuff where he slowly started to feel more comfortable being in a team setting," Papuchis said.

With Nebraska's two starting defensive end positions filled, coaches used the spring to also develop depth behind Turner and Allen.

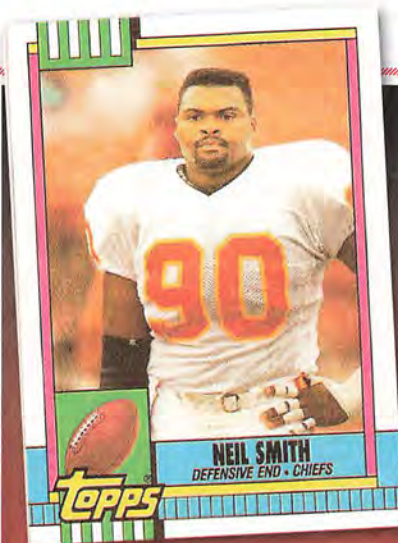
They liked what they saw. Papuchis said he was particularly excited about the development of Cameron Meredith, a 6-foot-4, 260-pound redshirted freshman.

"I think he plays the run well,



BARRY TURNER

Turner's injury, Allen stepped into a starting role as a sophomore, and he blossomed. Allen collected five sacks and 10 tackles for loss in his 11 starts.



HUSKER GREAT

Neil Smith

(1988-2000)

Smith was the second overall pick in the 1988 NFL draft, selected by the Kansas City Chiefs, with whom he played nine seasons. He had a combined 53 sacks during a four-season stretch (1992-95), including 15 in 1993, when he was first-team All-Pro. He played in six Pro Bowls.

RIISING STAR

Jason Ankrah

6-4, 250, Gaithersburg, Md.

Rivals.com ranked Ankrah, one of five four-star players in Nebraska's 2009 recruiting class, among the top 10 defensive end prospects in the country. He picked the Cornhuskers

over, among others, Michigan and Maryland, the other schools to which he made official visits.



24

*Combined
starts for Barry
Turner and
Pierre Allen.*

because he's physical and he uses his hands," Papuchis said. "And I think he's a deceptive pass rusher. He doesn't look explosive coming off the edge, but he understands how to rush the passer, how to work his moves that suit him well. He does a good job."

contribute.

"Last year, we threw him in a little bit during the fall in camp, and I think he was a little bit physically overwhelmed," Papuchis said. "Gaining strength and weight in the off-season has helped him be able to physically hold up in there.

He's going to continue to get stronger and more physically developed in the weight room as we go. I think his best football is ahead of him."

Senior David Harvey could also supply depth, although Papuchis said Harvey must get back into the routine of playing end after briefly moving to defensive tackle during the spring.

"I think we're creating some depth, and I feel good about where we're at right now," Papuchis said. "Are we where we want to be on Sept. 5? No. But we're getting closer."

"I think we're creating some depth, and I feel good about where we're at right now. Are we where we want to be on Sept. 5? No. But we're getting closer."

COACH JOHN PAPUCHIS on Nebraska defensive ends

Papuchis pointed to another redshirted freshman, Josh Williams, who's gained 30 pounds and is now 6-foot, 230 pounds, as a player who could

by Brian Rosenthal

PIERRE ALLEN

Defensive Tackles

Carl Pelini is always stressing the importance of a strong interior defensive line.

Having a couple of players in the middle who can "hold the fort," Pelini said, is important in any defensive scheme, but especially Nebraska's.

"It allows you to do some extra things in coverage, pull a linebacker out of a run fit and throw him into coverage," said Pelini, who enters his second season as Nebraska's defensive coordinator. "You help yourself in so many ways."

Naturally, then, Pelini is ecstatic to have a player like Ndamukong Suh

But who replaces Ty Steinkuhler as the player alongside Suh?

The leading candidate is redshirted sophomore Jared Crick of Cozad, who played in nine games last season.

"He's playing really physical and he's using his new size well," Pelini said of the 6-foot-5, 285-pound Crick.

"Terrence Moore, he has made as much improvement as anybody over four weeks (of spring practices), just in terms of his technique and his feet. He's really starting to think it."

Moore is a 6-2, 285-pound sophomore who played in seven games last season. If Suh is not in the game, Moore and Crick would likely man the middle. The two played together in reserve roles last season.

"We know what each other is going to do on every play," Crick said. "We have the best feel for each other."

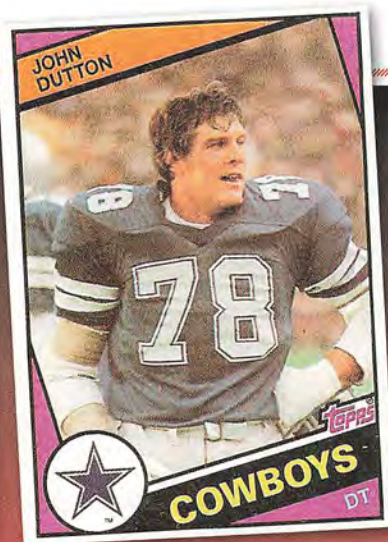
Redshirted freshman Baker Steinkuhler, the younger brother of Ty Steinkuhler, could also figure into the rotation inside. Baker Steinkuhler came to Nebraska as a highly-touted recruit from Lincoln (Neb.) Southwest High School. Pelini said Steinkuhler "had a long way to go" but also made progress.

"As a defensive lineman in high school, you so often get away with just



TERRENCE MOORE

returning. Suh, a senior nose tackle, led Nebraska last season with 76 tackles, including 7.5 sacks and 19 tackles for loss.



HUSKER GREAT

John Dutton

(1974-87)

Dutton was the fifth player selected in the 1974 NFL draft, by the Baltimore Colts, for whom he played five seasons. He was first-team All-Pro in 1976, as well as a three-time Pro Bowl selection. He played his final nine seasons with the Dallas Cowboys, starting 89 games.

RIISING STAR

Thaddeus Randle

6-1, 225, Galena Park, Texas

Randle was a first-team all-state selection in Class 5A, according to the Associated Press, with 70 tackles, including 17 for losses and

11.5 sacks, as a high school senior. He also was a finalist for the Touchdown Club of Houston's player-of-the-year award.



93

Number on
Big Suh's
jersey, of
course.

mauling people. You're just bigger and stronger than your opponents," Pelini said. "The last to come, the hardest thing to teach a young man, is how important

Now, Pelini said, Steinkuhler must do that on a consistent basis.

"It's kind of up-and-down right now," Pelini said. "He knows it. We talk

off he's going to be."

With Suh, Crick, Moore and Steinkuhler, Pelini said he has four players he wouldn't hesitate putting in any game, at any point. The goal now is to find a fifth player to work into the rotation.

"We had a lot of good things happen in the spring," Crick said. "The young guys have learned how to play our defense, and just learned how to play, really. It was a good spring for the young guys."

by Brian Rosenthal

"We've got to go out there and we've got to play as good as any linebacker corps in the country. It's a young group, but in saying that, it's got to become an old group by the time the season starts."

COACH MIKE EKELER on Nebraska linebackers

their hands are, keeping separation, keeping guys off your body. And he does that. He's starting to learn that."

about it all the time. He is improving. The more he does that, the better



NDAMUKONG SUH

Kickers

From time to time, Alex Henery would mention his interest in punting. But "I never really thought too much about it," said John Papuchis, Nebraska's kickers coach.

After Dan Titchener and Jake Wesch completed their eligibility last season, however, the coaches asked Henery, the second-team All-Big 12 place-kicker, if he was serious.

"They mainly just wanted me to want to do it rather than forcing me," Henery said one day after practice in the spring. "So they were the ones that kind of asked me, 'Do you want to do it?'"

"But I was the one who (initially)



AD KUNALIC & ALEX HENERY

expressed that I wanted to do it."

And why not? Henery walked on expecting to punt, not place-kick. He was a two-time, first-team all-state

punter at Omaha Burke, averaging over 41 yards per punt. He attempted only 10 field goals during his senior season, six of which were successful. But punting was his strength.

With that background, he's a serious candidate to succeed Titchener, for three seasons the No. 1 punter. But Henery has to earn the starting job in competition with redshirted freshman Brett Maher and sophomore Jonathon Damkroger, both walk-ons like him.

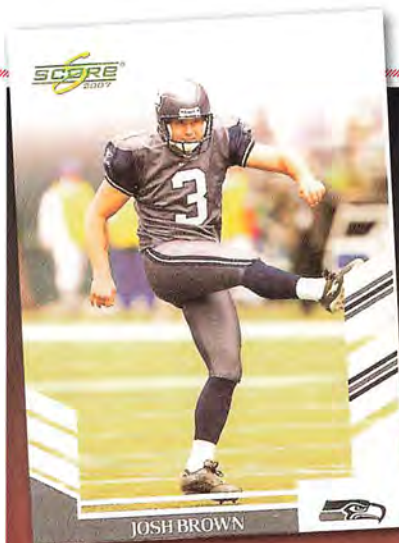
"I don't see why he can't do both," said Papuchis, a defensive intern and graduate assistant at LSU when Chris Jackson was punting and place-kicking for the Tigers.

"I got to see how he balanced his time," Papuchis said of Jackson.

"That's helped in this process. Not too many guys do (both). But he's (Henery) a talented athlete, so I think if he manages his time well, he can do both."

Henery, who turned down a soccer scholarship offer from Creighton, is "a talented kid," said Papuchis. "He's deceptively athletic."

Punting means "I'm kind of doing double-duty now, just dedicating twice as much time," Henery said. "You can't cut away time (from place-kicking)."



HUSKER GREAT

Josh Brown

(2003-present)

Brown, a seventh-round draft pick, has made 147-of-181 field goal attempts and all but one of 243 extra-point attempts. He is 19-of-30 on field goals of 50 yards or longer. Last season, his first with the St. Louis Rams, he made 31-of-36 field goal attempts, including 6-of-8 from 50 yards or more.

RISING STAR

Brett Maher

6-0, 170, Kearney, Neb.

In addition to punting and place-kicking, the athletic redshirted freshman played wide receiver in

high school, earning first-team all-state recognition. He also earned all-state honorable mention in basketball and won state titles in the long jump and pole vault,

setting a state record.



57

*Alex Henery's
school-record
FG yardage,
remember?*

During the spring, he would kick "maybe 25 balls a day," he said. "You can't really kill your leg. That's the one

57-yarder with 1:43 remaining against Colorado.

Junior Adi Kunalic returns to handle

kickoffs and back up Henery as the place-kicker — he kicked a 46-yard field goal against Nevada as a freshman.

Kunalic "can punt but doesn't really want to," Henery said.

Prior to the spring game, Papuchis said he and Henery have "a good relationship. He comes into my office, and we talk. That's been something I've stressed to him over and over. I don't want this punting to take away from his place-kicking ability. So far, he's been able to manage both."

Henery averaged 43.2 yards on four punts in the spring game, Maher 41.5 on four punts and Damkroger 47.5 on two punts. Maher "has a lot of potential. He has a very, very strong leg. He needs to become more consistent," said Papuchis. "Jon's kind of the consistent guy of the group as far as technique goes. So they all have their strong points."

No reason to name a No. 1 at spring's end, he said. "We're going to let it play out."

by Mike Babcock

"I'm kind of doing double-duty now, just dedicating twice as much time. You can't really kill your leg, that's the one thing you can't do as a kicker, kill your leg, because your technique goes out."

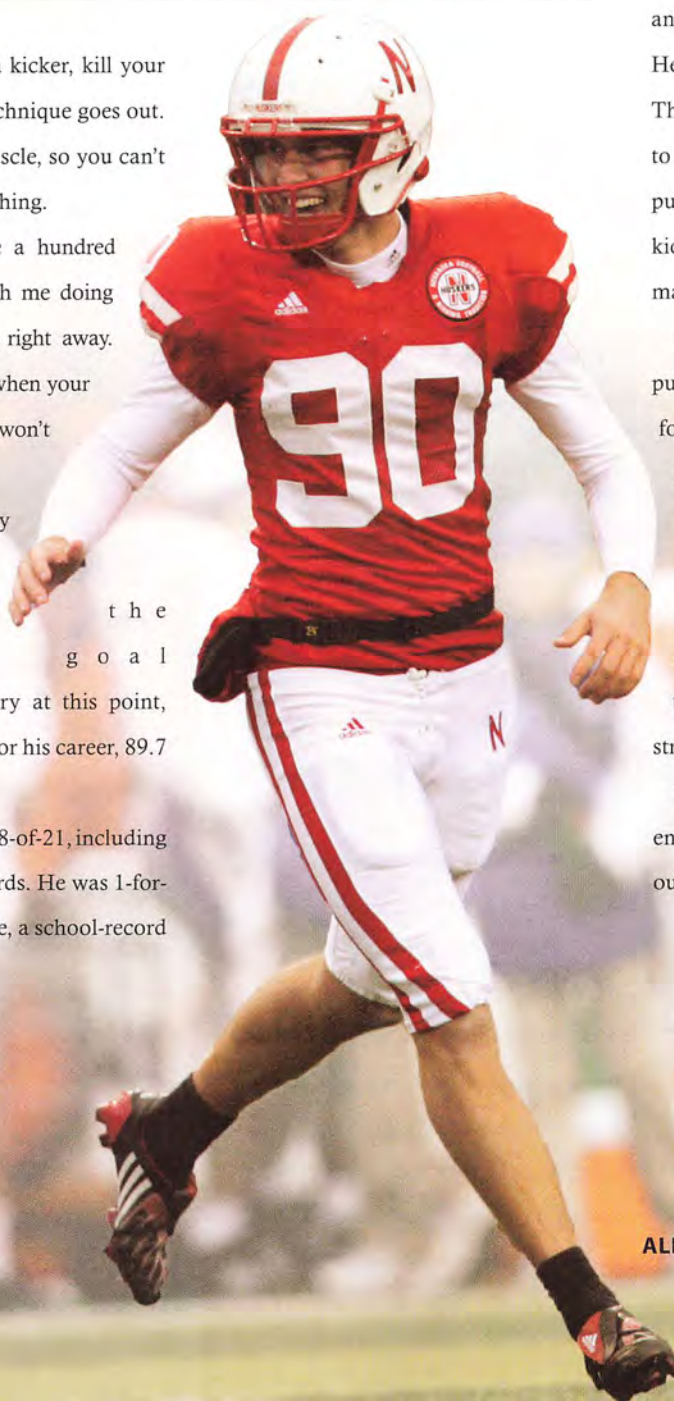
ALEX HENERY on possibility of adding punting responsibilities

thing you can't do as a kicker, kill your leg, because all your technique goes out. You don't have any muscle, so you can't get in a rhythm or anything.

"You can't just take a hundred reps a day because with me doing both, it'll kill your leg right away. There's no use kicking when your leg's dead because you won't get anything out of it."

Obviously, Henery knows what he's talking about. He's the most accurate field goal kicker in school history at this point, having made 26-of-29 for his career, 89.7 percent.

Last season, he was 18-of-21, including 6-of-6 from 40 to 49 yards. He was 1-for-3 from 50 yards or more, a school-record



ALEX HENERY

Defensive Backs

Nebraska secondary coach Marvin Sanders emphasizes the importance of depth in the defensive backfield "because of the offenses we're going to face in this conference," he said.

"You're going to face anywhere from three wide receivers to five wide receivers. With our package, we'd like to put some speed on the field, so we're going to have to have some numbers at defensive back because we don't want to get into a situation where we have one injury and all of a sudden our package becomes limited. We don't want that at all."

Nebraska features 10 returning

Armando Murillo.

Consequently, competition for playing time during spring drills was intense, according to junior Eric Hagg, the starting nickel back last season.

"It's crazy," Hagg said. "It's good. It makes everybody better. Because nobody has a starting spot locked up."

That means no days off, or even plays off.

If a player continues to struggle, "The next person will come up and take your spot," Hagg said. "You can get your spot back, but if you keep messing up, you have other people always coming up behind you."

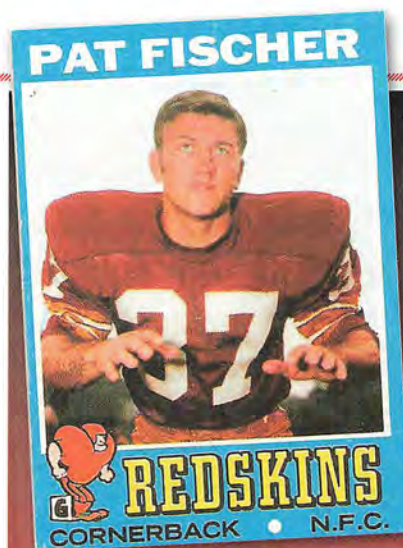
"We're going to have mistakes. But you can't have the same mistakes that you had the last practice. You have to fix that mistake. If you keep repeating mistakes, that's when you get taken out."

Juniors Anthony West and Prince Amukamara appear to be the leading candidates to start at cornerback in the fall. West started 11 games last season, while Amukamara saw significant time in the nickel and dime packages and as a reserve corner. Among those also in the hunt are sophomore Anthony Blue, who missed all of last season with a knee injury; sophomore Alfonzo Dennard,



ANTHONY WEST & MATT O'HANLON

letterwinners in the secondary, including eight players who have made starts during their careers. The only significant loss from last season is cornerback



HUSKER GREAT

Pat Fischer

(1961-77)

Fischer was a 17th round draft pick of the St. Louis Cardinals, the 232nd player selected. He began as a kick returner before establishing himself in the secondary. He had 56 career interceptions, including 10 in 1964. He played in Super Bowl VII, for George Allen's Washington Redskins, and was twice first-team All-Pro.

RISING STAR

Dijon Washington

6-0, 175, Lawndale, Calif.

Washington earned first-team all-league and third-team CIF all-state recognition as a high school senior.

Rivals.com ranked him as a four-star recruit and the No. 13 safety nationally. He's a "downhill" player who loves to punish people, according to his high school coach.



8

*Defensive
backs who
have started at
least once.*

who saw the majority of his action last season as a true freshman on special teams; and Dejon Gomes, a junior-college transfer who arrived in January.

can still play corner in the nickel or dime packages. Redshirted freshman P.J. Smith drew ample praise from coaches and teammates throughout the spring.

“When it all comes down to it, the best two guys - be it Matt O’Hanlon and Larry Asante or Rickey Thenarse and Larry or Eric (Hagg) and Larry - whoever the best two are will play.”

COACH MARVIN SANDERS on the Nebraska secondary

In addition, sophomore Lance Thorell returns after playing extensively in the dime package last season.

At the safety positions, Nebraska has a wealth of talent and experience, led by seniors Larry Asante (67 tackles last season), Matt O’Hanlon (52) and Rickey Thenarse (24). Hagg (39) made the move to safety this spring, but

“What I’m looking for are, who are the best two safeties?” Sanders said. “Eric Hagg’s been playing strong safety as an opportunity to get more repetitions. I’ve tried to balance how many strong’s and how many frees. But I want to get our guys to a point where they’re interchangeable. When it all comes down to it, the best two guys - be it Matt O’Hanlon and Larry Asante or Rickey Thenarse and Larry or Eric and Larry - whoever the best two are will play.”

Hagg obviously figures very prominently into any plan.

“He’s a guy who I think needs to be on the field every play,” Sanders said.

by Brian Rosenthal



LARRY ASANTE

COACHING BLOODLINES

BY MIKE BABCOCK

Mike Deck doesn't remember. But Shawn Watson does, 34 years later.

Watson was a high school freshman, a running back on the junior varsity football team. Deck was an assistant coach at the small school in southern Illinois – Carterville High.

What Watson can't forget is, Coach Deck "gave me the ball every play of the two-hour practice. I mean, I ran it every play, and he made me find myself," Watson said.

The experience pushed him to the limit. And it humbled him. It also reflected the respect he had for Deck, who would become Carterville's head coach when Watson was a junior.

"I had a great high school career because of him," said Watson, among a select 33 named to the prestigious Champaign-Urbana (Ill.) News-Gazette all-state team in 1977.

Watson rushed for 1,175 yards and 19 touchdowns in a Wishbone offense for a 9-1 team. Carterville was ranked No. 1 in its class, the only loss coming in the opening round of the state playoffs, to the No. 2-ranked team, on the final play of the game.

Statistics and the accolades were a poor reflection of Deck's influence, however. "He impacted my life





because it really opened up everything else that happened to me," Watson said.

Ask Watson to name those who have impacted his coaching career and Deck will be among the first Nebraska's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach mentions.

"He's like a second father," said Watson. "That's how close we are."

The list of influential coaches extends well beyond Deck, who's retired now and still residing in Carterville. Watson rattles off the names, too numerous to mention all of them here: Bob Dawson, his sixth-grade basketball coach and elementary school principal; Rey Dempsey, the "ultimate grinder" and his coach at Southern Illinois; Mike White,

for whom he was an assistant at Illinois; Randy Walker, for whom he was an assistant at Miami of Ohio; and Gary Barnett, whose offense he coordinated before Bill Callahan, with whom he coached at Illinois (and shared an office for a time), brought him to Nebraska to coordinate recruiting and coach tight ends.

Watson was a Fighting Illini graduate assistant for two years and then became a full-time assistant. He was coaching in the Big Ten at age 26. Rick George, an assistant recruiting coordinator for Illinois at the time, encouraged him to join White's staff. George, now chief of operations for the PGA Tour, also grew up in southern Illinois, in nearby Carbondale.

"I always ask kids, 'How do you want me to coach you?' And then, 'How do you learn best?'"

Sean Watson





He and George, “my best friend in the world,” would visit Deck, and the three of them would sit on the porch and talk football.

White hired him to “be a great recruiter and be a great drill coach,” said Watson. “He laid out my career for me. He taught me this offense. He taught me how to coach, how to be a great fundamental coach, the importance of it. So I feel a deep obligation to him.”

White was “an unbelievable teacher of coaches,” he said.

So was Barnett, from whom he learned to adjust according to the individual.

“I always ask kids, ‘How do you want me to coach you?’ And then, ‘How do you learn best?’” Watson said. “You have to break down all the walls. You have to get rid of them

because society automatically builds walls. I want to break down all those barriers that exist and build a cooperation with the student, or with the player, so that they know they can fail with me. I want them to fail in the classroom not on the football field. We have to experience failure so we can grow.”

Watson grew on the practice field that afternoon in the fall of 1974. He found out about himself at a time when he was, by his own admission, headstrong, “rambunctious, really a hot-head.” He also was committed to becoming a football coach, if not on that particular day soon after.

“I always knew I wanted to coach,” he said, “always.” Even then.

Everyone assumed he would take over the family

construction business. But his parents encouraged him to follow his heart. When he left for college, first Illinois, they “pulled me aside and said, ‘Look, this is about you now ... be what you want to be,’” he said.

“I was blessed with really good ones (parents). I think they’d tell you I was a good son. But I wish I would have listened faster and sooner.”

Because of coaches such as Deck “I found the person that was hiding inside me,” Watson said. “It was the person, all along, my parents were trying to get me to be.”

Deck reinforced what Watson saw at home. His parents “would never let me be anything but humble,” he said. “I was raised in a real humble home. That was the whole deal.

“My dad would always tell me the truth, the way he saw it, always kind of stretched me. So would my mom. She was probably tougher than Dad in a lot of respects.”

His dad wouldn’t allow him to read newspaper accounts of his athletic successes, pulling the sports section. “He wouldn’t let me see it. ‘You don’t need to see it. You know how you did.

I told you how you did. Coach Deck will tell you how you did. That’s all you need to know,’” said Watson.

The friendship with Deck over all the years reflects an essential element of his philosophy. Coaching at the collegiate level is not only about teaching but also about building relationships.

“It’s totally relationships; it’s all relationship-driven,” Watson said. “If it was any other way, I wouldn’t be in this business. I wouldn’t coach because it wouldn’t be worth it.”

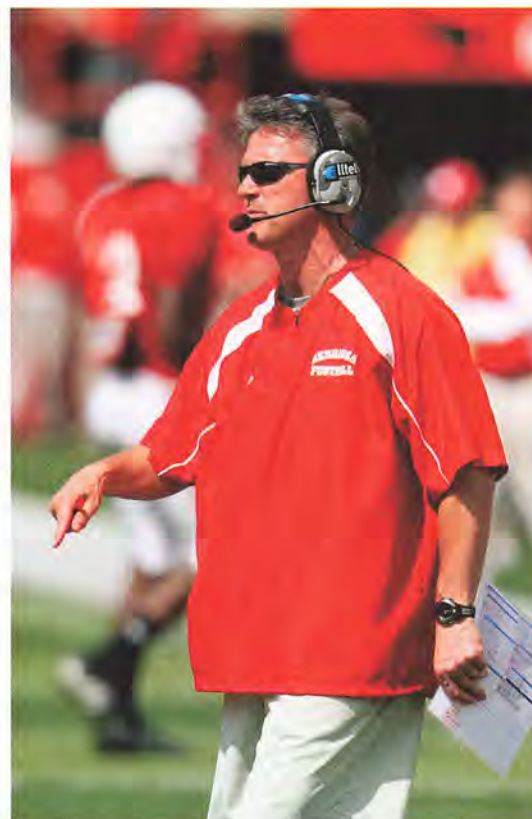
That’s why Watson was so emotional following the Gator Bowl game. Joe Ganz, Watson’s student, had finished his Cornhusker career by being selected the game’s MVP.

That’s also why Deck was on the sideline for last season’s New Mexico State game. Watson insisted he pick a game. And when Ganz slipped out of the backfield to catch a touchdown pass from Marlon Lucky early in the second quarter, Deck saw it coming, much to the surprise of those around him.

He had sat in on the quarterbacks meeting the day before, as Watson’s special guest. **N**

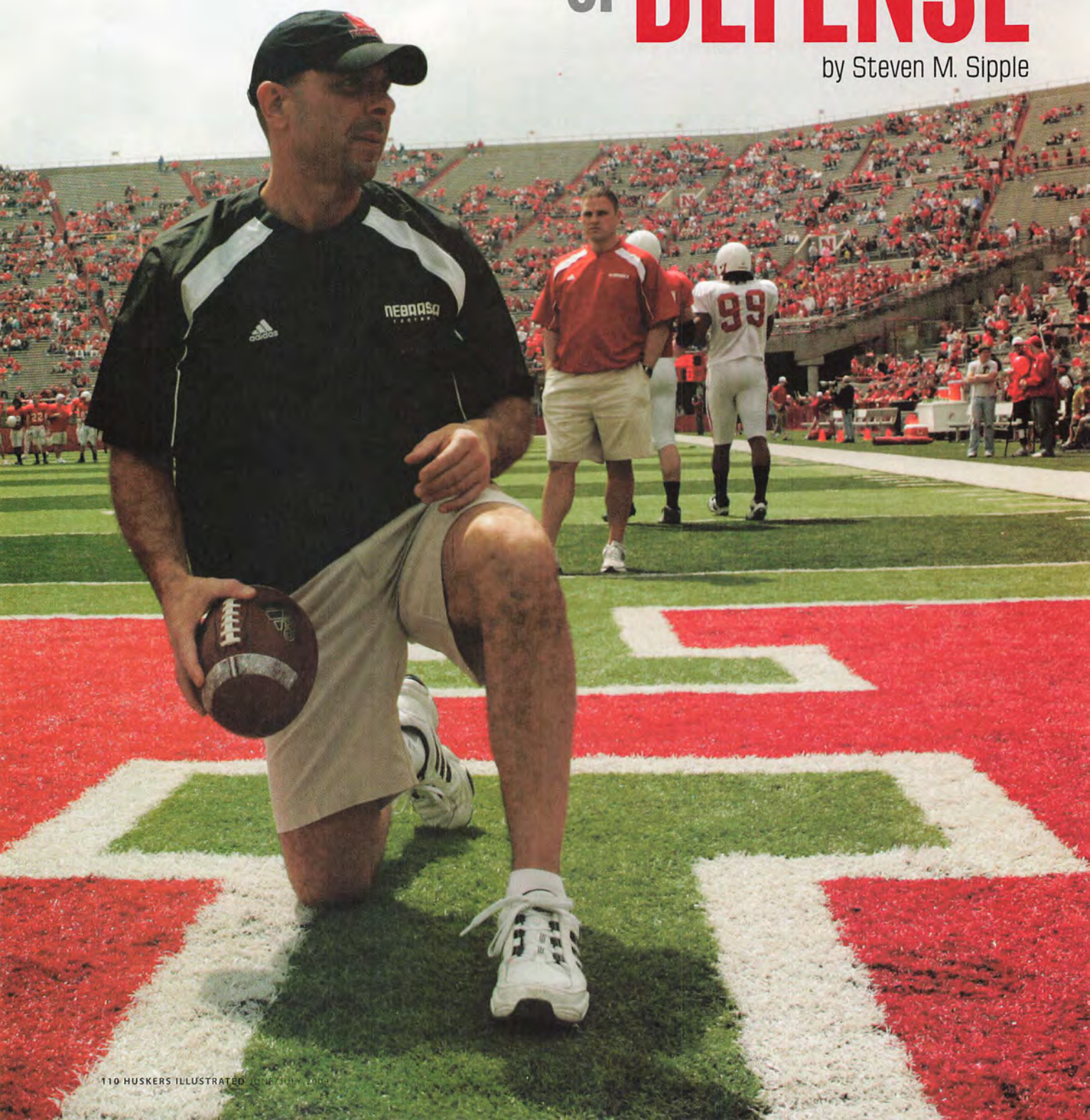


SHAWN WATSON CUT HIS COACHING TEETH AS A GRADUATE ASSISTANT AT ILLINOIS AND WAS A FULL-TIME COACH BY THE AGE OF 26.



THE BROTHERHOOD OF DEFENSE

by Steven M. Sipple



Understand this about the Pelini brothers, Bo and Carl: They operate well amid discomfort. Accomplished football coaches often possess that quality. After all, isn't discomfort what defense is all about, especially causing it? Isn't it all about making offensive players squirm in their cleats before de-cleating those players entirely?

At any rate, it's hard not to admire the gamble Carl Pelini took back in 2003. He eschewed comfort. He left a safe path for a more challenging one. He received no guarantees when, at age 37, he chose to work for a pittance as a graduate assistant at Nebraska after spending three years as head coach at Fitch High School in Austintown, Ohio.

"I lived a couple miles from our stadium (in Austintown)," said Pelini, who has master's degrees in journalism and education. "The Fitch program was growing to where it was starting to run itself. I saw myself as being successful at what I was doing."

However, "I also knew I could compete against anybody in terms of coaching ability. So the natural progression was to try to get somewhere to compete with the best against the best, right?"

If coaches are going to challenge their players in an intense manner, well, coaches had better extend themselves, too. Right? In effect, that's what Carl Pelini was doing in 2003 at Nebraska. He craved the challenge of coaching at the highest level, even if getting there required a degree of risk

for his family. Even if it required working 12-hour days for an annual salary of \$12,000. It was a roll of the dice, and we now know the gamble paid handsomely.

Carl Pelini's path led to three seasons as a full-time defensive line coach at Ohio University. Of course, the path then led back to Nebraska, where in December of 2007 he was named defensive coordinator. A cushy, \$208,000-per-year job

working for his younger brother? Cushy? Well, think again. Yes, Husker head coach Bo Pelini is generally in charge of the defense. But Carl Pelini obviously has a significant say-so, and he anticipates his input increasing. For one thing, Bo Pelini wants to have a role in the offense, and that obviously requires a significant time commitment.

What's more, Carl said,

"I know he has a tremendous amount of confidence in me and knows what I can do. I know he knows it because he's said it for years. We've talked in great depth week in and week out through every season when we were together, and when we weren't together ... He knows what I know.

"Bo's love is defense, and he wants to maintain a role in



"Bo's love is defense, and he wants to maintain a role in running that defense. But as time goes on, and the program develops, and he's wearing so many hats, I think eventually as he gets more comfortable he'll welcome relinquishing more and more responsibility to our staff."

Carl Pelini



running that defense. But as time goes on, and the program develops, and he's wearing so many hats, I think eventually as he gets more comfortable he'll welcome relinquishing more and more responsibility to our staff."

Upon being hired in 2007, Carl wasn't necessarily expecting to be named defensive coordinator. However, "Whether I had that title or not, I was going to aggressively pursue responsibility because I'm confident in what I can do and what I know and how I can teach (defense)."

Plenty of evidence exists to support that contention, including Nebraska's improvement on defense in 2008 compared to the 2007 season. The Huskers finished the



2008 campaign ranked 55th nationally in total defense after winding up 111th in 2007 under former defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove.

How much will Nebraska's defense improve in 2009, assuming it improves at all? Bo Pelini began spring drills in March by proclaiming his plans are for the Huskers to make a "huge jump defensively" this coming

season. The defense features six returning starters, including All-Big 12 nose tackle Ndamukong Suh.

Said Carl Pelini: "I don't think we had enough competition for jobs last season. We lack the depth now that we hope to have in a year or two. But it's still way better than it was last year."





In addition to improved depth, Nebraska players and coaches make clear the importance of players' improved understanding of the system, techniques and fundamentals.

"Players are really starting to ask second-level questions," Carl said. "They're getting past the memorization part of learning the defense, and they're really starting to understand the concept of the defense.

"Here was the deal last year: They would make a wrong call, and they'd move the front the wrong way, and a panic would set in. Now if they make a wrong call, and the front moves the wrong way, they still understand the concepts and fits – enough to move themselves into a position to compensate. If they make a mistake in a shift, they can shift to a complementary defense and we're fine.

"They're starting to get it, and that makes me excited."

Carl Pelini oversees the defensive line, which made dramatic improvement from 2007.

"I could tell from their attitude they were disappointed in themselves about (the 2007 season)," Pelini said of his

linemen. "I mean, they were their biggest detractors. They came in really hungry. They wanted it."

It'll be interesting watching the Pelini brothers continue to put their stamp on Nebraska's defense. They have a rugged-but-savvy quality to their personalities that seems well-suited for such employment. They will demand a "unique level" of effort from players, Carl said. To be sure, let's not forget the role discomfort plays in the Pelini plan.

"When people walk off the field after playing us, I want them to be sore," Carl said. "I want our defense to be very physical. The thing is, I think that mentality gets lost sometimes. I mean, with the spread offenses the way they are, I think a lot of defensive coaches have let that mentality go and said, 'We're just going to be more athletic and try to tackle people in the open field.' To me, you can be physical defending an empty set just as much as you can be physical defending a three-back set.

"Every hit has to be a violent collision."

Causing considerable physical discomfort ... **N**

North Dakota native at home in the wild

BY TOMMY DAHLK

Hunting and fishing have really helped Brent Qvale on the football field.

Wait, what's that?

As odd as it sounds, the freshman-to-be offensive lineman from Williston, N.D., thinks his favorite pastimes are a lot like football.

"I think hunting helps," Qvale said. "You have to have patience to play football. You have to know what you are doing, and you have to have a plan like when you are hunting."

Since he was 7-years-old Qvale has gotten up early to hunt deer and pheasants. Last year, he said, he shot his most impressive-sized deer to date.

His schedule was always tight, but he'd manage to find time to spend in the outdoors. He hopes to get an opportunity to do that at Nebraska and likes the outdoor scene here.

But that wasn't the reason he chose Nebraska. Actually, Qvale said, he knew he was going to Nebraska the minute the Cornhuskers offered a scholarship, and it was the only school to which he took an official visit.

The Gatorade North Dakota Player of the Year, he also got offers from Iowa and Wisconsin. But "Nebraska always stuck out," he said. "It was a pretty easy choice."

Getting scholarship offers from big-name programs is rare for high schoolers in the Peace Garden State. In fact, Qvale will be the first from North Dakota to play at Nebraska since Darin Erstad, a baseball



recruit and first-round selection in the Major League draft, joined the team as a punter and place-kicker in 1994.

North Dakota isn't really known for producing an abundance of blue-chippers on the football field. That fact made it tougher for Qvale to stand out in recruiting.

"It was challenging," he said. "No one really has the thought to look up here."

Since he knew coaches probably wouldn't spend a lot of time visiting the scarcely populated state, Qvale attended three camps last summer.

At those, coaches definitely started to notice the 6-foot-7, 335-pound lineman, and Rivals gave him a three-star rating.

Not bad for a North Dakotan, right?

After his going to the camps, Qvale said, he hopes coaches will realize there is football talent in North Dakota, not just talent on hockey rinks.

"There definitely is some talent," he

said. "It just is that no one thinks to look up here. I know the talent isn't as good as other states, but there are a lot of talented guys up here who can play."

Besides becoming the most ballyhooed football recruit in North Dakota, Qvale starred at track and basketball at Williston High School.

In basketball, he dominated the post and averaged over 20 points and 10 rebounds his senior year at the same high school that produced legendary NBA coach Phil Jackson. Qvale led his team to the state tournament and was a finalist for the state's Mr. Basketball Award. In track, he won the state shot put title his junior year.

Although he'll miss the state in which he's lived his whole life, Qvale is excited to head to Lincoln. He's hoping he'll still get a chance to hunt and fish.

"It will be different coming from a rural place to something more urban," Qvale said. "But it will be a good change." **N**

Martin high energy on, off the field

BY TONY BOONE

Eric Martin loves to hit people.

That should come as no surprise if anyone knew that his dad, Kenneth Johnson, was a professional boxer who once sparred with Sugar Ray Leonard.

The passion for physical contact seems to run in the family. "I've kind of got that mentality of fighting," Martin said. "I got it from him. That's why I love football – just the fact that I can hit somebody."

Nebraska's incoming freshman linebacker said competition brings out the best in him. Intensity is a big part of his game. The Rancho Verde High School star from Moreno Valley, Calif., said his motor, and his mouth, rarely get a rest on the football field.

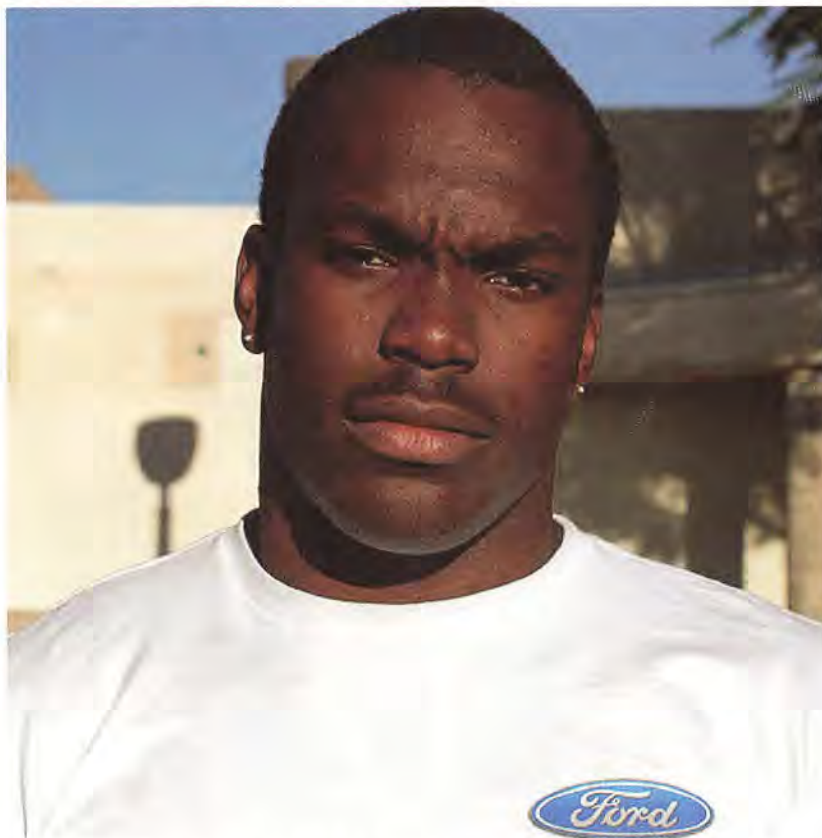
Take his team's game against rival Moreno Valley High during his senior year, for example. Martin, still upset about losing to the cross-town foe the year before, insisted his team shut out the Vikings.

"I took that personally," he said. "And I was like, 'They can't score, not one point.'"

Moreno Valley didn't, and Martin let them know about it throughout the game while he racked up more than 20 tackles, four sacks and a pair of interceptions, one of which he returned for a touchdown.

"That game, for whatever reason, I just had a lot of anger built up," he said. "And I went over and beyond of what I should've done. But that was my best game, too."

Martin said he's normally wild on the field. Away from the game, he's pretty much the same way. "I'm kind of crazy



myself," he said. "I'm the type that will go do something stupid in a heartbeat."

Nebraska defensive coordinator Carl Pelini, who recruited the California teenager, noticed that right away. And he assured Martin he would relate well to the Huskers' resident football wacko, linebackers coach Mike Ekeler.

"He said Coach Ekeler was just like me, and he is a crazy guy," Martin said. "We've got that in common, doing stuff that normal people don't do."

"When I took my trip out there, I saw how crazy he really is. We were out in the snow with no shirts on throwing snowballs at each other."

Ekeler visited Martin soon after Nebraska became the first school to offer him a scholarship. That was at the end of

Martin's junior year, when things weren't going so well for him academically.

"They took that risk and offered me, hoping I would make the grades," he said. "I really appreciated that and took that into consideration."

Martin, whose grades are no longer an issue, eventually chose Nebraska over six other schools, including four from the Pac-10. He said he was never a Pac-10 fan growing up. In fact, football wasn't even in the picture until he was a freshman in high school.

"I just wasn't interested in football, and I didn't really like football," Martin said. "I played soccer, baseball and basketball."

"Then my friends asked me to play (football) with them, and I ended up being the best player on the team." **N**



BIG 12 PREVIEW

WELL, YES, A LITTLE respect is usually appreciated.

In this case, however, Kansas coach Mark Mangino dismissed it.

"That's nice people are saying that," he said during the Big 12 coaches spring teleconference in late April. "We don't pay any attention to it. We have to earn our own way."

At issue was post-spring speculation that the Jayhawks would be favored in the Big 12's North Division come fall. But "look what speculation did to Wall Street," said Mangino.

"We appreciate the fact that people think that way, but we've got a lot of work to do."

He wasn't denying anything. "We're on solid ground," he said.

But much would have to happen

between then and early December for his team to be playing for the 2009 Big 12 championship at new Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

"We need a lot of things to happen to win a championship," Mangino said.

Veteran quarterback Todd Reesing and 18 returning starters, including receivers Dezmon Briscoe and Kerry Meier, are a good place to begin. However, Nebraska will have something to say about whether the Jayhawks make their first appearance in the conference title game on Dec. 5.

In fact, a few folks – and not just Nebraska fans – might be inclined to consider the Cornhuskers as North Division favorites. After all, Kansas would appear to have a more difficult inter-divisional schedule than Nebraska,

even though the Jayhawks will play Nebraska in Lawrence on Nov. 14.

Still, the Cornhuskers could lose that game and win the division – unless the teams finish with the same conference record, as happened to them last year.

Thanks to a 40-37 Kansas victory against Missouri on the final Saturday of the regular season, Nebraska tied the Tigers in the North. But Missouri's 52-17 victory at Nebraska to open conference play sent the Tigers to Kansas City, where they were thrashed by Oklahoma.

The Sooners could be playing for a fourth consecutive Big 12 championship come December, or not. The South Division figures to be a three-team scrap, as it was last season, when Texas and Texas Tech tied the Sooners. Oklahoma State likely will replace Tech in the race

this time around.

The Cowboys have top-10 potential nationally, according to pre-season speculation.

"I'm guessing there's probably going to be at least four teams in the top 20 and three in the top 10," Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy during the coaches' spring teleconference. "I don't think there's any question it's a difficult league. But that's a good thing."

Quarterbacks figure prominently in such speculation. Oklahoma has Heisman Trophy winner Sam Bradford. Texas has Walter Camp Award winner Colt McCoy. And Gundy's Cowboys have Zac Robinson as part of a 2009 version of the "Triplets," along with Kendall Hunter and Dez Bryant.

Despite a 10-point victory against Oklahoma and a last-second loss at Texas Tech, Texas could do nothing but complain about the Big 12 rule resolving a three-way divisional tie.

The Longhorns felt they deserved the opportunity to play for the conference championship and by extension for the BCS national championship. The memory of that perceived slight could serve as motivation this season, though Texas coach Mack Brown claims not.

"Our goals are to win the opening game, win the Big 12 South, win the conference championship and win a bowl game every year, and hopefully that would be (for) the national championship," he said during the teleconference. "So our goals really haven't changed since we've been here."

Essentially, he was saying the same thing Mangino said. **N**

NORTH



The **JAYHAWKS'** passing game is certainly state-of-the-art, but the interior of their offensive line has to be rebuilt, and their linebackers will all be new.



Junior quarterback **ZAC LEE**, who has thrown just two passes during his Cornhusker career (one complete), is the key to coach **BO PELINI's** second season.



The Buffaloes have one bowl appearance but they have yet to finish with a winning record under coach **DAN HAWKINS**; this could be the season.



The Tigers won 22 games the past two seasons – only Oklahoma and USC won more – but they must replace, in order: **JEREMY MACLIN**, **CHASE DANIEL** and **CHASE COFFMAN**.



With all due respect to Thomas Wolfe, you can go home again, and not only that, **BILL SNYDER's** Wildcats will be playing in a stadium bearing his name.



The Cyclones made an off-season trade with Auburn, their head coach for Auburn's defensive coordinator, who is now their head coach, **PAUL RHOADS**.

SOUTH



COLT MCCOY will operate behind a veteran offensive line and try to get the Longhorns where they might have belonged last season, in the Big 12 title game.



Heisman Trophy winner **SAM BRADFORD** decided to return and the defense could be among the best, but four offensive line starters are gone.



Not one but two SI.com writers, Andy Staples and Stewart Mandel, placed the **COWBOYS** at No. 6 in the nation in post-spring top 25-rankings.



MIKE LEACH's plug-and-play offense – no disrespect intended – won't have the same quality of players to plug in, but the defense could be better.



With versatile and elusive **ROBERT GRIFFIN** at quarterback, the Bears will probably surprise someone along the way, and maybe even win a conference road game.



The Aggies have a long way to go on both sides of the ball in **MIKE SHERMAN's** second season, with freshmen playing a role in the journey.

SAM BRADFORD



Nebraska is among only four Big 12 teams without a returning starter at quarterback. Texas Tech, Missouri and Kansas State are the others. Oklahoma's Sam Bradford, the Heisman Trophy winner, heads the list, followed by Texas's Colt McCoy, the Heisman runner-up. Bradford and McCoy also finished first and second nationally in pass efficiency, with Bradford leading the nation in touchdown passes and ranking third in passing yardage.

QB, SCHOOL, YR	COM.	ATT.	INT.	YDS (RK)	TDS (RK)	EFFICIENCY (RK)
Sam Bradford, Oklahoma, Jr.	328	483	8	4,720 (3)	50 (1)	180.8 (1)
Colt McCoy, Texas, Sr.	332	433	8	3,859 (9)	34	173.8 (2)
Zac Robinson, Oklahoma State, Sr.	204	314	10	3,064	25	166.8 (5)
Todd Reesing, Kansas, Sr.	329	495	13	3,888 (8)	32	148.5
Robert Griffin, Baylor, So.	160	267	3	2,091	15	142.0
Jerrod Johnson, Texas A&M, Jr.	194	326	10	2,435	21	137.4
Austen Arnaud, Iowa State, Jr.	247	401	10	2,792	15	127.4
Cody Hawkins, Colorado, Jr.	183	320	10	1,892	17	118.1

PRO POTENTIAL

A level of talent in the Big 12 this season is reflected in Todd McShay's mock draft for 2010 posted on ESPN.com the week after the 2009 draft. Nine of the first 10 picks were from the Big 12. Nebraska's Ndamukong Suh was projected as the second selection behind Oklahoma's Sam Bradford. Only players entering at least their fourth season were included. (McShay was among the analysts on ESPN's draft coverage.)

RK.	PLAYER, POS.	SCHOOL	NFL TEAM
1.	Sam Bradford, QB	Oklahoma	St. Louis Rams
2.	NDAMUKONG SUH, DT	NEBRASKA	CLEVELAND BROWNS
3.	Russell Okung, OT	Oklahoma State	Detroit Lions
4.	Trent Williams, OT	Oklahoma	Oakland Raiders
5.	Jermaine Gresham, TE	Oklahoma	Kansas City Chiefs
6.	Colt McCoy, QB	Texas	Seattle Seahawks (from Denver)
7.	Gerald McCoy, DT	Oklahoma	Jacksonville Jaguars
8.	Taylor Mays, S	USC	San Francisco 49ers
9.	Adam Ulatoski, OT	Texas	Green Bay Packers
10.	Sergio Kindle, OLB	Texas	San Francisco 49ers (from Carolina)

McShay writes that Suh "is an underrated talent with quickness, power and versatility."

MISSOURI HEADS THE LIST

Missouri led the way in the NFL draft, with six players selected, the first wide receiver Jeremy Maclin in the first round, 19th overall. The other Tigers drafted were: William Moore, S (2nd); Chase Coffman, TE (3rd); Colin Brown, OL (5th); and Stryker Sulak, DE (6th).

Oklahoma was second on the list, followed by Texas and Texas Tech with four each. Nebraska had three, Texas A&M had two, and Baylor, Colorado, Kansas State and Oklahoma State had one each.

Kansas and Iowa State were shut out in this year's draft.

EARLY OUT

Four Big 12 players left school early by way of the NFL draft, three of them first-round picks: Missouri's Jeremy Maclin, Texas Tech's Michael Crabtree and Kansas State's Josh Freeman. Texas Tech's Brandon Williams, a defensive end, was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys in the fourth round.



JOSH FREEMAN

LEAGUE BEST

A Big 12-record seven conference players were selected in the first round of 2009 NFL draft, led by Baylor's offensive tackle Jason Smith, the second pick. Overall, 28 Big 12 players were drafted.

First-Round Picks

2.	Jason Smith, Baylor, OT	St. Louis Rams
10.	Michael Crabtree, Texas Tech, WR	San Francisco 49ers
13.	Brian Orakpo, Texas, DE	Washington Redskins
17.	Josh Freeman, Kansas State, QB	Tampa Bay Buccaneers
19.	Jeremy Maclin, Missouri, WR	Philadelphia Eagles
20.	Brandon Pettigrew, Oklahoma State, TE	Detroit Lions
32.	Evander "Ziggy" Hood, Missouri, DT	Pittsburgh Steelers

CATCHING ON

The Big 12's top two receivers (in yardage) return, led by Oklahoma State's Dez Bryant, whose 1,480 yards ranked second nationally. His 19 touchdowns were tied for second nationally.

RK.	RECEIVER, SCHOOL	REC-YDS	TDS
1.	Dez Bryant, Oklahoma State (Jr.)	87-1,480 (2)	19 (2T)
2.	Dezmon Briscoe, Kansas (Jr.)	92-1,402 (3)	15
3.	Jordan Shipley, Texas (Sr.)	89-1,060	11
4.	Brandon Banks, Kansas State (Sr.)	67-1,049	9
5.	Kerry Meier, Kansas (Sr.)	97-1,045	8

IT STOPS HERE

No surprise here; the Big 12's top returning tacklers all are linebackers, led by Missouri's Sean Weatherspoon. The tackle totals are according to official Big 12 statistics, which sometimes vary from those compiled by individual schools, based on evaluation of game film by coaches.

RK.	PLAYER	SOLO	ASSIST	TOTAL
1.	Sean Weatherspoon, Missouri (Sr.)	73	76	149
2.	Travis Lewis, Oklahoma (So.)	70	73	143
3.	Joe Pawelek, Baylor (Sr.)	55	73	128
4.	Jeff Smart, Colorado (Sr.)	59	50	109
5.	Roddrick Muckelroy, Texas (Sr.)	69	33	102
6.	Andre Sexton, Oklahoma State (Sr.)	63	37	100

Pawelek achieved his total in 12 games, two fewer games than Weatherspoon and Lewis, and led the conference with 10.7 tackles per game.

WHAT A RUSH

The Big 12's top five rushers return, led by Oklahoma State's Kendall Hunter, whose 1,555 yards ranked seventh nationally.

RK.	PLAYER, SCHOOL (YR)	Att.	Yds (Ave.)	TDs
1.	Kendall Hunter, Oklahoma State (Jr.)	241	1,555 (6.5)	16
2.	Chris Brown, Oklahoma (Sr.)	217	1,220 (5.6)	20
3.	Derrick Washington, Missouri (Jr.)	177	1,036 (5.9)	17
4.	DeMarco Murray, Oklahoma (Jr.)	179	1,002 (5.6)	14
5.	Jay Finley, Baylor (Jr.)	149	865 (5.8)	7
8.	ROY HELU, JR., NEBRASKA (JR.)	125	803 (6.4)	7





HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED ALL-BIG 12 TEAM

FIRST TEAM OFFENSE

POS.	PLAYER	HT.	WT.	YR.	SCHOOL
WR	Dez Bryant	6-2	215	Jr.	Oklahoma State
WR	Dezmon Briscoe	6-3	200	Jr.	Kansas
WR	Jordan Shipley	6-0	190	Sr.	Texas
TE	Jermaine Gresham	6-6	261	Sr.	Oklahoma
OL	Russell Okung	6-6	305	Sr.	Oklahoma State
OL	Adam Ulatoski	6-8	320	Sr.	Texas
OL	Chris Hall	6-4	300	Sr.	Texas
OL	JACOB HICKMAN	6-4	295	SR.	NEBRASKA
OL	Trent Williams	6-5	308	Sr.	Oklahoma
QB	Sam Bradford	6-4	218	Jr.	Oklahoma
RB	DeMarco Murray	6-1	205	Jr.	Oklahoma
RB	Kendall Hunter	5-8	190	Jr.	Oklahoma State
PK	ALEX HENERY	6-2	175	JR.	NEBRASKA
KR	Perrish Cox	6-0	195	Sr.	Oklahoma State

FIRST TEAM DEFENSE

POS.	PLAYER	HT.	WT.	YR.	SCHOOL
DL	Auston English	6-3	253	Sr.	Oklahoma
DL	NDAMUKONG SUH	6-4	300	SR.	NEBRASKA
DL	Gerald McCoy	6-4	295	Jr.	Oklahoma
DL	Sergio Kindle	6-4	239	Sr.	Texas
LB	Travis Lewis	6-2	232	So.	Oklahoma
LB	Joe Pawelek	6-2	240	Sr.	Baylor
LB	Sean Weatherspoon	6-2	245	Sr.	Missouri
DB	Jordan Lake	6-1	210	Sr.	Baylor
DB	Darrell Stuckey	6-1	205	Sr.	Kansas
DB	Dominique Franks	6-0	189	Jr.	Oklahoma
DB	Châpelle Brown	5-7	170	Sr.	Colorado
P	Derek Epperson	6-3	240	Jr.	Baylor
PR	Dez Bryant	6-2	215	Jr.	Oklahoma State

Offensive Player of the Year: Sam Bradford, Oklahoma

Defensive Player of the Year: **NDAMUKONG SUH, NEBRASKA**

SECOND TEAM OFFENSE

Pos.	Player	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
WR	Kerry Meier	6-3	220	Sr.	Kansas
WR	Detron Lewis	6-0	209	Jr.	Texas Tech
WR	Ryan Broyles	5-11	175	So.	Oklahoma
TE	MIKE MCNEILL	6-4	240	JR.	NEBRASKA
OL	Charlie Tanner	6-4	305	Sr.	Texas
OL	Kurtis Gregory	6-5	305	Sr.	Missouri
OL	Brandon Carter	6-7	354	Sr.	Texas Tech
OL	Nick Stringer	6-6	271	Sr.	Kansas State
OL	Ryan Miller	6-8	310	So.	Colorado
QB	Colt McCoy	6-3	210	Sr.	Texas
RB	Chris Brown	5-11	210	Sr.	Oklahoma
RB	Derrick Washington	5-11	225	Jr.	Missouri
PK	Dan Bailey	6-1	185	Jr.	Oklahoma State
KR	Brandon Banks	5-7	150	Sr.	Kansas State

SECOND TEAM DEFENSE

Pos.	Player	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Jeremy Beal	6-3	253	Jr.	Oklahoma
DL	Caleb Blakesley	6-5	292	Sr.	Kansas
DL	Jaron Baston	6-1	305	Sr.	Missouri
DL	McKinner Dixon	6-3	250	Sr.	Texas Tech
LB	Jeff Smart	6-0	220	Sr.	Colorado
LB	Rodrick Muckelroy	6-2	235	Sr.	Texas
LB	Andre Sexton	6-0	217	Sr.	Oklahoma State
DB	Earl Thomas	5-10	195	So.	Texas
DB	Joshua Moore	5-11	184	Jr.	Kansas State
DB	Trent Hunter	5-10	185	So.	Texas A&M
DB	James Smith	5-9	191	Sr.	Iowa State
P	Mike Brandtner	6-1	211	Sr.	Iowa State
PR	Josh Smith	6-0	190	Jr.	Colorado

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Kansas Jayhawks

Think about some of the most successful teams in Big 12 history.

Nebraska won a national championship for 1997 and played for the 2001 national title with senior standouts Scott Frost and Eric Crouch.

Kansas State's best year was 1998, when the Wildcats were led by senior quarterback Michael Bishop.

Oklahoma won the 2000 national championship led by senior Josh Heupel, the Heisman Trophy runner-up.

And Texas won the 2005 title with Vince Young, a fourth-year junior in his final season.

It often takes an experienced quarterback to cross a threshold. Veterans Colt McCoy at Texas and Sam Bradford at Oklahoma look to go out big winners this season.

So does Todd Reesing.

Perhaps no player symbolizes the growth of a program better than this senior from Austin, Texas, about whom few knew coming out of high school.

He's undersized (generously listed at 5-foot-11), and doesn't have a cannon for an arm. But he gets the job done, and no play demonstrated that better than a 26-yard touchdown pass to Kerry Meier on fourth down with 27 seconds remaining to give the Jayhawks an upset victory over arch-rival Missouri. Unless there's an unexpected collapse, he'll leave Kansas the most successful quarterback in school history.

The school records he doesn't already own should belong to Reesing by season's end. But the big number is his 20-6 record as a starter – including two bowl victories.

The big news at the position is the development of reserve Kale Pick, a redshirted freshman. This is important because it allows Meier to devote all of his practice time to wide receiver. Meier came to Kansas as a quarterback and shifted to wide receiver as a sophomore.

Nobody is more sure-handed than Meier, and he has become



DEZMON BRISCOE

STRENGTHS

Kansas plays pitch and catch about as well as anybody. The Jayhawks passing game has

reached new heights under coordinator Ed Warinner.

Besides **KERRY MEIER** and Dezmon Briscoe, Jonathan Wilson,

who caught 43 passes, returns. The defense should be improved with a better pass rush. The Jayhawks also will focus on preventing sacks. Their guys went down 31 times last season. Darrell Stuckey is one of the Big 12's premier defensive backs, and he becomes the leader of the defense.

QUESTION MARKS

A few areas that must improve for Kansas to rise to the top of the North: pass rush, pass protection, kickoff and punt return, red zone offense

and time of possession. The Jayhawks lagged behind several in the Big 12 in all of those categories. Replacing three quality linebackers is a difficult task, but one made easier by improving the defensive front.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

The Jayhawks are in the second of their two-year rotation-from-hell with Texas, Oklahoma and Texas Tech on the slate. Remember, the Orange Bowl season came when Baylor, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M were the South Division foes. But Kansas doesn't play either team that finished ahead of them in the North – Nebraska or Missouri – on the road. The Huskers come to Lawrence, where they've had major issues on the last two visits, and the Tigers' date is in Kansas City. The September slate sets up well. A loss to any of the Division I-As would be considered an upset.

an excellent route runner. But he's not the team's top receiving threat; Dezmon Briscoe is. And when the Jayhawks' kick return game stalled, Briscoe went back there and averaged 27.4 yards per return as well.

Early last season, the Jayhawks weren't getting much rushing-game production from the spread offense. Finally, in the league-opener at Iowa State, Jake Sharp broke through and grabbed the position. He finished with 860 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Defensively, the Jayhawks will offer a different look.

"We're playing less and less with three linebackers," coach Mark Mangino said. "Close to 80-percent of the time we're playing with two linebackers and an extra safety because of the way Big 12 offenses have evolved."

Safety Darrell Stuckey was an important part of a defense that



figured things out as the season progressed. He led the secondary and was second on the team with 98 tackles and five interceptions. There

is plenty of experience here, with Justin Thornton at corner, Phillip Strozier at safety and Daymond Patterson, a wide receiver turned corner.

Chris Harris had been a starting corner before moving to nickel, and among the team's newcomers junior college transfer Calvin Rubles is expected to be part of the cornerback rotation.

The defensive line is build around tackle Caleb Blakesley and

end Jake Laptad, who had seven sacks. Jamal Greene, who started seven games at tackle, is back.

The big move on defense was running back Angus Quigley to linebacker. He spent bowl preparation there.



TODD REESING

The kicking and return games are in good shape. Punter Alonso Rojas and kicker Jacob Bradnstetter are back, so is long snapper Kayl Anderson. With Briscoe returning kicks late last season, the Jayhawks saw how good he could be there.

But this team is about the quarterback, the best in the North Division. Reesing is what makes Kansas the favorite.

AT THE HELM

Mark Mangino, 8th year
45-41 (.523), all at Kansas

Mangino has accomplished many things at Kansas. He has won a BCS bowl game and tied for a division title. But his program hasn't played for a Big 12 championship. This season would appear to be his best shot.



KEY RETURNEES

Todd Reesing, QB

Workhorse looks for a third consecutive bowl appearance after passing for 3,888 yards and 32 touchdowns last season, ranking in the top 10 nationally in passing yards, total offense and completions.

Kerry Meier, WR

Once the starting quarterback, Meier has become the Jayhawks' best all-around player. He caught a school-record 97 passes for 1,045 yards and eight touchdowns, tying for sixth in the nation in catches per game.

Dezmon Briscoe, WR

Difference-making wide receiver put up huge numbers in 2008: 92 catches for 1,407 yards (fourth-most in the nation) and a school-record 15 touchdowns.

KEY LOSSES

James Holt, LB

The Jayhawks' leader in tackles (105), tackles for loss (19.5), sacks (10) and forced fumbles (six) last season.

Mike Rivera, LB

Always around the ball, he played hurt most of the season and still made 93 tackles.

Joe Mortensen, LB

Let's make it a linebacking trio here. Kansas will miss his steady play, too.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Rell Lewis, RB

The 5-10, 201-pound sophomore from Muskogee, Okla., made a name for himself with a productive spring.

"Look at what speculation did to Wall Street. It's nice that people are saying (Kansas is the division favorite). But we don't pay any attention. We have to earn our way, and we know that."

Mark Mangino on heightened expectations this season.

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Northern Colorado
Sept. 12	at Texas-El Paso
Sept. 19	Duke
Sept. 26	Southern Mississippi
Oct. 10	Iowa State
Oct. 17	at Colorado
Oct. 24	Oklahoma
Oct. 31	at Texas Tech
Nov. 7	at Kansas State
Nov. 14	Nebraska
Nov. 21	at Texas
Nov. 28	*Missouri

*-Kansas City

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	Florida Internat'l.....W, 40-10
Sept. 6	Louisiana Tech.....W, 29-0
Sept. 12	at South Florida.....L, 37-34
Sept. 20	Sam Houston St.....W, 38-14
Oct. 4	at Iowa State.....W, 35-33
Oct. 11	Colorado.....W, 30-14
Oct. 18	at Oklahoma.....L, 45-31
Oct. 25	Texas Tech.....L, 63-21
Nov. 1	Kansas State.....W, 52-21
Nov. 8	at Nebraska.....L, 45-35
Nov. 15	Texas.....L, 35-7
Nov. 29	*Missouri.....W, 40-37
Dec. 31	#Minnesota.....W, 42-21

*-Kansas City

#Insight Bowl

10-YEAR RECORD

1999:	5-7
2000:	4-7
2001:	3-8
2002:	2-10
2003:	6-7
2004:	4-7
2005:	7-5
2006:	6-6
2007:	12-1
2008:	8-5



Colorado Buffaloes

3rd PROJECTED FINISH

At the team's senior awards banquet in December, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins threw down the gauntlet.

"Ten wins and no excuses."

Hmmm.

Hawkins gets credit for thinking big. This would have been no big deal if he had put it out there from his previous job as Boise State's head coach.

Three times in five seasons his teams won at least 11 games. But Colorado finished 5-7 last season and hasn't been over .500 in any of his three years in Boulder.

Fans expected more success. There were problems in 2008. No Big 12 team was hit harder than Colorado. The Buffaloes finished the season without their leading rusher and two starters in the secondary and with a reassembled offensive line.

In all, Colorado suffered 11 season-ending injuries, and nine of them required surgery. The final two-deep included 27 sophomores and freshmen.

But, here's the no-excuses part. "It's big-boy football," Hawkins said. "When you have a season like we did there's nothing that's not open for discussion."

Even the role of his son, Cody, who has started all but one time over the past two seasons. Dad threw open the quarterback job after Hawkins' sophomore season didn't improve over his freshman season, and he and Tyler Hansen are battling for the position.

Completion percentage has been a sticking point for Hawkins. He's at 56.7 percent for his career in a conference where 60 percent is the norm. Eleven of his 25 career interceptions have been batted in the air at the line of scrimmage.

The redshirt was pulled off Hansen, and he led Colorado to a victory over Kansas State. He's a better athlete, more of a running threat, and Dan Hawkins has proved there is no favorite son candidate. Playing both is a possibility, although Hansen broke his thumb in the spring game and missed the first six weeks of summer conditioning.



JOSH SMITH

STRENGTHS

Colorado will run it better.

In his second season,

DARRELL SCOTT should



be much better

than he was as

a freshman and

leading rusher

Rodney Stewart

returns. The

offensive line

should be stout enough to make this work. A successful

running game will loosen

things up for quarterbacks

Cody Hawkins and Tyler

Hansen. Josh Smith is a

weapon Colorado needs to

use as often as possible.

QUESTION MARKS

Last season started to spiral

as the offense went into

the tank. Everybody else

in the Big 12, it seemed,

was running a fast-break

attack, but Colorado plodded

along. Dan Hawkins feels

better about his quarterback

situation, or will when Tyler

Hansen's broken thumb

recovers, but the proof is in the performance. Simply, the position has to perform better in 2009. Colorado got an unexpected late departure from offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich, who went to Oregon around the end of spring practice. Erik Keisau, the Buffs receivers coach and passing game coordinator, will run the offense.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

It's not the usual September of heavyweights for Colorado, although don't be fooled by a trip to Toledo. Kansas visited the Glass Bowl a few years back and got thumped. The Rockets are coming off a 3-9 season but have in Tim Beckman a coach who knows the Buffs. He was Oklahoma State's defensive coordinator the past two years. A big one for Colorado will be Oct. 17 when Kansas visits. A Hawkins-coached team has not defeated the Jayhawks.

Colorado also needs to get more from its running backs, and the spring workouts looked like a step in the right direction. In the spring game, four backs, including last year's rushing leader Rodney Stewart, combined to rush for 270 yards.

Scotty McKnight is a top-notch wide receiver who missed some of spring ball with a partially torn triceps. Over the past two seasons he has 89 receptions and nine touchdowns and hasn't played in a high-powered offense.

Josh Smith, whose 1,987 all-purpose yards last year were the second



most in school history, is the only other established wideout. He and McKnight will have to show the way for an inexperienced group.

New offensive line coach Denver Johnson, who had been Illinois State's head coach, should have a good group, starting with guard Ryan Miller, although depth could be a problem.

The Buffaloes figure to play more 3-4 to take advantage of their strength in the back seven. At linebacker Jeff Smart, the team's top tackler, returns, along with Shaun Mohler. And Marcus Burton becomes the middle linebacker.



Cha'pelle Brown is one of the most experienced corners in the Big 12, having started in parts of all three seasons, 24 in all. He's played in every game.

Up front, Marquez Herrod goes from part-timer to starting defensive end, but unproven is the theme here. Tackle Curtis Cunningham is the only lineman who was on the field for at least 100 snaps last season.

Kicking was a problem in 2008. The Buffs were only six for 17 on field goals, while opponents made 20 of 24. But with Smith, the return game is in good shape.

That has to improve, and so does the offense in for Colorado to reach double-digit victories.

AT THE HELM

Dan Hawkins, 4th year at Colorado (13-24, .351), 9th year overall (66-35, .653)
After five glorious seasons at Boise State, Hawkins looks for his second bowl appearance in four years at Colorado. The first followed a 65-51 victory against Nebraska, which led to the dismissal of Bill Callahan and the arrival of Bo Pelini.



KEY RETURNEES

Josh Smith, WR/KR

One of league's most productive players not working from a spread attack. He ranked fifth in the Big 12 in kick returns and sixth in punt returns.

Darrell Scott, TB

Competing for the starting job, but his performance in the spring game could foreshadow the future: 90 yards rushing, three receptions for 38 yards, a 37-yard kickoff return, a touchdown pass that was nullified and a 48-yard punt.

Cha'pelle Brown, CB

Undisputed leader of what should be a solid secondary, Colorado is promoting Brown as a candidate for All-America honors and the Thorpe Award.

KEY LOSSES

George Hypolite, DT

Second-team all-conference according to the coaches, anchored of the defensive front.

Brad Jones, LB

Seventh-round draft pick of the Green Bay Packers led the Buffs in sacks, with seven, and quarterback hurries, with 14.

Daniel Sanders, C

Had the most games with best offensive line grades for Buffs in 2008, received all-conference honorable mention.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Bryce Givens, OT

Redshirted freshman from Denver added weight to his 6-6 frame and will be competing for a starting role.

"I never felt I was in shape last season." Running back Darrell Scott, the prized recruit who has vowed to have a better sophomore season than freshman year when he rushed for 343 yards and one touchdown

Running back Darrell Scott the prized recruit who has vowed to have a better sophomore season than freshman year when he rushed for 343 yards and one touchdown.

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept 5Colorado State
Sept. 11 at Toledo
Sept. 19Wyoming
Oct. 1at West Virginia
Oct. 10 at Texas
Oct. 17Kansas
Oct. 24 at Kansas State
Oct. 31 Missouri
Nov. 7Texas A&M
Nov. 14at Iowa State
Nov. 19at Oklahoma State
Nov. 27 Nebraska

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30 Illinois W, 52-42
Aug. 31 *Colorado State.... W, 38-17
Sept. 6 Eastern Wash., .. W, 31-24
Sept. 18 W. Virginia... W, 17-14 (OT)
Sept. 27 at Florida State ... L, 39-21
Oct. 4 Texas L, 38-14
Oct. 11 at Kansas..... L, 30-14
Oct. 18 Kansas State W, 14-13
Oct. 25 at Missouri..... L, 58-0
Nov. 1 at Texas A&M..... L, 24-17
Nov. 8 Iowa State W, 28-24
Nov. 15 Oklahoma State ... L, 30-17
Nov. 28 at Nebraska..... L, 40-31

*at Denver

10-YEAR RECORD

1999.....7-5
2000.....3-8
2001.....10-3
2002.....9-5
2003.....5-7
2004.....8-5
2005.....7-6
2006.....2-10
2007.....6-7
2008.....5-7



Missouri Tigers

4th

PROJECTED
FINISH

Nobody knows bad college football like Bill Snyder.

When he arrived on the Kansas State campus for the 1989 season, he took over the most downtrodden program in the Big Eight, if not the nation.

Over the next 15 seasons, Snyder's efforts were miraculous, taking the Wildcats to the verge of the first BCS National Championship Game in 1998 and winning the 2003 Big 12 title over top-ranked

Oklahoma.

Now comes the second verse, same as the first.

Snyder agreed to replace the failed administration of Ron Prince, the man who succeeded him after the 2005 season.

Prince beat Texas twice, which is more than Oklahoma did in that tenure. But going 0-9 against Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas – the losses to the Jayhawks were particularly painful – sealed Prince's fate. Not even Josh Freeman, a first-round NFL Draft selection in April, could stem the tide.

Let the rebuilding begin, and Snyder isn't sugar-coating the task.

"We have a long ways to go," Snyder said. "It's just going to take some time."

Finding Freeman's replacement was the first job. Freeman was a three-year starter, and his long-time friend from their Kansas City days, Carson Coffman steps in. Coffman, a junior, was an excellent high school quarterback, who led his team to two state championships.

He also has the blood lines. Brother Chase was Missouri's All-America tight end. Father Paul spent 11 years in the NFL.

Snyder describes his offense as "broad based," but it will include the quarterback running, and

Coffman spent time during the spring working on pitches from the passing game.

A pair of redshirted freshman, Collin Klein and Joseph Cassanovoid, are in the mix.

The primary target will be a small but dynamic wide receiver,



DERRICK WASHINGTON

STRENGTHS

Four straight bowl seasons, two straight division titles and a Big 12-best six players



taken in April's NFL Draft have created expectations at Missouri unseen since the glory 1960s. There

should be something of a dip this season – no third straight double-digit victory output

– but a stout offensive line, a promising defensive front,

SEAN WEATHERSPOON

and Derrick Washington give Missouri enough pieces to stay competitive.

QUESTION MARKS

Who will be the catch and run guys? Maclin was deadly after he caught the ball. Coffman had the game's best hands for a tight end. Danario Alexander becomes the Tigers deep threat, but the pass and catch game clearly needs time to

regenerate itself.

Gone from the roster is the most accurate kicker in NCAA history, Jeff Wolfert. No obvious successor yet. Turnover ratio took a plunge last year. The Tigers ranked second in the Big 12 and 11th nationally in 2007. Last year, they were eighth in the Big 12.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Nobody in the Big 12 plays a tougher opening game on an annual basis than the Tigers, who take on Illinois. Mizzou has won four straight in the series, but the Illini likely will be favored for this year's game in St. Louis. A trip to Nevada could be tricky. In Big 12 play, the Tigers leave the state only three times and get contenders Nebraska and Texas at home. The season-ending Border War against Kansas at Arrowhead has become can't miss drama.

Brandon Banks. He's 5-foot-7 but came on strong in his first season out of junior college. Banks caught 67 balls, and his 15.7-yards per reception were second in the Big 12. He also finished second in the league on kickoff returns at 27.7 yards.

"You can do a number of things with someone that has that kind of quickness and speed," Snyder said.

One player who looks for new life in the new regime is running back Keithen Valentine. He had a big spring game last year, his first after transferring from Mississippi Delta Community College, but finished the season with 129 yards. Logan Dold is a powerful back who had an excellent



freshman season, rushing for 336 yards. But there is some speculation he could be moved to safety.

Three offensive linemen who started the 2008 finale were seniors, so senior left tackle Nick Stringer becomes the line's elder statesman and leader.

One of the team's biggest pluses last season was the play of defensive end Brandon Harold, fresh out of high school, who led the Wildcats with 10 ½ tackles for loss

The linebackers are led by returning starters Ulla Pomele and Alex Hrebec, with John Houlik having

a good spring. Cornerback Joshua Moore, who led the Big 12 in pass break-ups, and free safety Chris Carney are the experienced players in the secondary.

Snyder assembled an impressive staff, even if his first choice for offensive coordinator fled.

Andy Ludwig left Utah and stayed in Manhattan for a few weeks before becoming California's coordinator.

The ACC provided the co-defensive coordinators, Vic Koenig, a former K-Stater, from Clemson, and Maryland's Chris Cosh, who coordinated Snyder's defense in 2005.

This Manhattan project won't be easy, but at least K-State has the man with the blueprint on the job.



BLAINE GABBERT

AT THE HELM

Gary Pinkel, 9th year, 59-41 at Missouri 19th season in Division I-A, 132-78-3

It's a year unlike any other for Pinkel, the first in seven years without Brad Smith or Chase Daniel at quarterback. A third straight division title isn't expected but a bowl season is.



KEY RETURNEES

Elvis Fisher, OT, So.

His protection on the left side will help Gabbert's development.

Derrick Washington, RB, Jr.

Topped 1,000 rushing yards on a passing team.

Sean Weatherspoon, LB, Sr.

One of the nation's best.

KEY LOSSES

Chase Daniel, QB

Two division championships are his legacy.

Jeremy Maclin, WR/KR

His speed and athleticism cannot be replaced.

Chase Coffman, TE

The Big 12's surest set of hands moves on.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Blaine Gabbert, QB, So.

At 6-5, 235, has the size and arm strength but savvy takes time.

Brandon Gerau, WR, So.

Became a favorite and reliable target in spring.

Jacques Smith, DE, So.

Along with Aldon Smith gives Mizzou potential on the ends.

"As Don James used to say, if you're worried about your defense after spring ball, you're not going to have a very good summer."

Missouri Coach Gary Pinkel

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	.....Illinois (St. Louis)
Sept. 12	.....Bowling Green
Sept. 19	.....Furman
Sept. 26	.....at Nevada
Oct. 8	.....Nebraska
Oct. 17	.....at Oklahoma State
Oct. 24	.....Texas
Oct. 31	.....at Colorado
Nov. 7	.....Baylor
Nov. 14	.....at Kansas State
Nov. 21	.....Iowa State
*Nov. 28	.....Kansas (Kansas City)
*at Arrowhead Stadium	

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	Illinois	.....W, 52-42
Sept. 6	SE Missouri	.....W, 52-3
Sept. 13	Nevada	.....W, 69-17
Sept. 20	Buffalo	.....W, 42-21
Oct. 4	at Nebraska	.....W, 52-17
Oct. 11	Oklahoma State	.....L, 28-23
Oct. 18	at Texas	.....L, 56-31
Oct. 25	Colorado	.....W, 58-0
Nov. 1	at Baylor	.....W, 31-28
Nov. 8	Kansas State	.....W, 41-24
Nov. 15	at Iowa State	.....W, 52-20
*Nov. 29	Kansas	.....L, 40-37
\$Dec. 29	Northwestern	W, 30-23, OT
*at Arrowhead Stadium;		
\$-Alamo Bowl		

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	.....4-7
2000	.....3-8
2001	.....4-7
2002	.....5-7
2003	.....8-5
2004	.....5-6
2005	.....7-5
2006	.....8-5
2007	.....12-2
2008	.....10-3



5th PROJECTED
FINISH

Kansas State Wildcats

Nobody knows bad college football like Bill Snyder.

When he arrived on the Kansas State campus for the 1989 season, he took over the most downtrodden program in the Big Eight if not the nation.

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1998 and winning the 2003 Big 12 title over top-ranked Oklahoma.

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Prince beat Texas twice, which is more than Oklahoma did in that tenure. But going 0-9 against Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas – the losses to the Jayhawks were particularly painful – sealed Prince's fate. Not even Josh Freeman, a first-round NFL Draft selection in April, could stem the tide.

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"We have a long ways to go," Snyder said. "It's just going to take some time."

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He also has the blood lines. Brother Chase was Missouri's All-America tight end. Father Paul spent 11 years in the NFL.

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A pair of redshirt freshman, Collin Klein and Joseph Cassanovoid, are in the mix.



BRANDON HAROLD

STRENGTHS

There are some offensive pieces here. Wide out

BRANDON BANKS can

fly and he

thoroughly

impressed

Snyder in the

spring. Last

year's leading

rusher, Lamark

Brown is back to

his original position at wide receiver. Logan Dold runs like a throwback fullback, and running back Keithen Valentine, who doesn't know how he got in Ron Prince's doghouse, has a new lease on life with Snyder. Jeron Mastrud could be one of the Big 12's better tight ends. It comes down to the offensive line and Carson Coffman, who takes over a quarterback.

QUESTION MARKS

This was a dysfunctional team last season, and Snyder's first job was to

get everybody pulling in the same direction, which appears to be happening. But is there enough talent to be competitive right away? These guys scored four touchdowns in a quarter against Oklahoma, won at Texas A&M, should have won at Colorado.

The defense has to improve. One guy to keep an eye on is tackle Jeffrey Fitzgerald, who transferred from Virginia and sat out last season.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Ron Prince tried to upgrade it, Snyder wants to soften it. This year is an ideal slate with a winnable non-conference game at UCLA. The Iowa State game at Arrowhead Stadium means the Wildcats play on three true Big 12 road games, so there is opportunity. Beating Kansas on Nov. 7 in Manhattan would go a long way toward restoring the pride in the program.

The primary target will be a small but dynamic wide receiver, Brandon Banks. He's 5-7 but came on strong in his first season out of junior college. Banks caught 67 balls for his 15.7-yards per reception were second in the Big 12. He also finished second in the league on kickoff returns at 27.7 yards.

"You can do a number of things with someone that has that kind of quickness and speed," Snyder said.

One player who looks for new life in the new regime is running back Keithen Valentine. He had a big spring game last year, his first after transferring from Mississippi Delta Community College, but finished the



season with 129 yards. Logan Dold, a powerful back who had an excellent freshman season, gaining 336 yards last season, although there is some speculation that Dold could be moved to safety.

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with John Houlik having a good spring. Cornerback Joshua Moore, who led the Big 12 in pass break-ups, and free safety Chris Carney are the experienced players in the secondary.

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This Manhattan project won't be easy, but at least K-State has the man with the blueprint on the job.



CARSON COFFMAN

AT THE HELM

Bill Snyder, 18th year

136-68-1 (.666) all at Kansas State

Snyder becomes the Grover Cleveland of football coaches, a two-termer. This task will be as difficult as the one he took on in 1989. The woeful Wildcats had managed only one winning season in the previous 18 and were a combined 3-40-1 in the previous four.



KEY RETURNEES

Brandon Banks, WR

Don't be deceived by his 5-7 frame; dude can ball, ranking second in the conference in kick returns as well as fifth in all-purpose yardage.

Brandon Harold, DE

One of the Big 12's top defensive newcomers last season, Harold was credited with 10.5 tackles for loss, earning freshman All-America recognition as well as all-conference honorable mention.

Jeron Mastrud, TE

Mastrud was second on the team in receptions (38) and third in receiving yards (435) and will be looking for more catches with a new quarterback and new offensive system.

KEY LOSSES

Josh Freeman, QB

The NFL loves his potential, overlooking his 14-18 career record for the Wildcats.

Ian Campbell, DE

The former walk-on enjoyed a productive career, had 47 tackles and 4.5 sacks last season.

Gerard Sexparth, OT

The leader of a solid offensive line.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Carson Coffman, QB

He has thrown only 46 passes for the Wildcats, completing 28 for 304 yards with one touchdown and two interceptions. But he was a big winner in high school, and that counts for something.

"I think we realized we are a work in progress."

Kansas State Coach Bill Snyder

after the Wildcats completed spring workouts

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	.....	Massachusetts
Sept. 12	.....	Louisiana
Sept. 19	.....	at UCLA
Sept. 26	.....	Tennessee Tech
Oct. 3	.....	*Iowa State
Oct. 10	.....	at Texas Tech
Oct. 17	.....	Texas A&M
Oct. 24	.....	Colorado
Oct. 31	.....	at Oklahoma
Nov. 7	.....	Kansas
Nov. 14	.....	Missouri
Nov. 21	.....	at Nebraska
*-at Kansas City		

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	North Texas	.....	W, 45-6
Sept. 6	Montana State	.....	W, 69-10
Sept. 17	at Louisville	.....	L 38-29
Sept. 27	Louisiana	.....	W, 45-37
Oct. 4	Texas Tech	.....	L, 58-28
Oct. 11	at Texas A&M	.....	W, 44-30
Oct. 18	at Colorado	.....	L, 14-13
Oct. 25	Oklahoma	.....	L, 58-35
Nov. 1	at Kansas	.....	L, 52-21
Nov. 8	at Missouri	.....	L, 41-21
Nov. 15	Nebraska	.....	L, 56-28
Nov. 22	Iowa State	.....	W, 38-30

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	.....	11-1
2000	.....	11-3
2001	.....	6-6
2002	.....	11-2
2003	.....	11-4
2004	.....	4-7
2005	.....	5-6
2006	.....	7-6
2007	.....	5-7
2008	.....	5-7



Iowa State Cyclones

Paul Rhoads, the Ankeny, Iowa, native and former Iowa State assistant won his introductory news conference with his local appeal.

"I know how special Ames and Iowa State were to me during my first tenure and having the chance to return and lead this program reads like a Hollywood script,"

Rhoads said. "We will be passionate. We will bring pride back to the Cyclone nation."

Pride, sure.

Defensive intensity? Undoubtedly.

Victories? Maybe not for a while.

Transition has arrived at Iowa State, much sooner than athletic director Jamie Pollard expected. Gene Chizik fled to Auburn after a two-year run that produced a 5-19 record, including 0-8 in the conference play last season that left fans wondering if the program was headed in the right direction.

Wonder no more. Chizik wasn't the man for the job. If anybody knows the difficulty of the task, it's Rhoads. He spent five years on the staff under Dan McCarney, from the end of the Big Eight era through the beginning of the Big 12. He missed the 2000 bowl

season by a year but took great pride in the accomplishments of the program he helped construct.

Defense is Rhoads thing, and it got it done in eight seasons at Pittsburgh, which won a Big East title in 2004. Five of the defenses he's coordinated ranked in the nation's top 30 for scoring and three in the top 12 for total defense.

Need a highlight? That was Rhoads' defense that shut down high-flying West Virginia in a 13-9 Panthers victory in the 2007 regular-season finale at Morgantown, W.Va., that prevented the Mountaineers from playing in the BCS National

Championship Game.

The next season took him to Auburn, where he coordinated the Tigers defense last season. Iowa State hopes it got the better end of what amounts to a coaching trade.

Improving the defense is a good place to start in Ames. Iowa State surrendered averages of 453 yards and 36 points per game



STRENGTHS

The Cyclones are one of three North teams (along with Kansas and Colorado) with

returning starting quarterbacks.

The problem for Iowa State is **AUSTEN ARNAUD** is

running a new

offense. Arnaud has dual-threat talent and his running ability should be put to use the way it was in the earlier years of Chase Daniel and Todd Reesing. In all, nine starters return on offense, six on defense and most of the kicking game. It's not exactly a bare cupboard. And the Cyclones had some tough losses last season, falling in overtime at UNLV, leading Kansas by 20 at halftime only to lose by two and playing Iowa, Colorado and Kansas State tough. With a few breaks the record would have been more acceptable.

QUESTION MARKS

Smaller-budget programs need the kind of continuity

that Iowa State used to have with McCarney. Rhoads becomes the third coach in four years. That's three new sets of assistants, new directions, new rules. It's going to take time to get this thing competitive. Will the spread work right out of the gate? Two years ago, Baylor had trouble when it installed the attack. But it worked almost immediately at Kansas and Missouri.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Rhoads' first game as a head coach comes against North Dakota State, a tough-as-nails I-AA program coached by former Nebraska assistant Craig Bohl. Two years ago they won at Minnesota and last year fell at Wyoming by a field goal. Next comes the annual bloodbath with Iowa followed by a trip to Kent and a visit from Army. A best case scenario is 3-1. Worst case, 1-3. Take your Big 12 victory opportunities when you can get them, and there aren't many.

(42 points in Big 12 play). The pass defense was especially leaky, with opponents completing about 68 percent and throwing for three scores per game.

As much as attention as the defense needs, the buzz around Iowa State is the new spread offense. If you can't beat them, join them seems to be the idea here. No-huddle, shot gun formation under coordinator Tom Herman, who ran it at Rice.



The advantage for Iowa State is an experience quarterback who seems comfortable in the system.

Austen Arnaud completed 247 of his 401 passes for 2,792 yards and 15 touchdowns last season, his first as a starter.

Iowa State also appears to have the wide receiving corps to make a new attack work. Second-year players Sedrick Johnson, Lonzie Range and Jason Carlson had good spring games, and seniors Marquis Hamilton and Houston Jones combined for 58 receptions last year.

Rushing leader Alexander Robinson

is back, and Iowa State welcomes Florida transfer Bo Williams.

The biggest adjustment to a spread comes on the offensive line. The good news is, the Cyclones have plenty of experience here, with some players forced on the field earlier than planned because of injuries.

On defense, the secondary could be a strength. Strong safety James Smith, who topped the team in tackles, is among seven defensive backs with starting experience.

A turnaround won't happen overnight, but in Rhoads at least the Cyclones have a coach who knows the territory and wants to be in Ames.



LEONARD JOHNSON

AT THE HELM

Paul Rhoads, 1st year

Rhoads follows a Big 12 trend of hiring coordinators for first coaching jobs.

Sometimes it works (Stoops, Leach, Mangino). Sometimes it doesn't (Prince, Chizik).



KEY RETURNEES

Austen Arnaud, QB

Fourth-year junior will pick things up quickly

Jesse Smith, LB

Former walk-on has started 24 straight games

Leonard Johnson, WR

Set NCAA record for KO return yards in a game last season

KEY LOSSES

R.J. Summral, WR

He'd have loved a crack at this offense

Kurtis Taylor, DE

Iowa State's top defensive player

Brandon Hunley, SS

Reliable player who started 10 games

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Bo Williams, RB

Florida transfer will step on field for first time in Ames

David Sims, SS

Juco transfer will compete for starting spot

Zach Spears, OL

Huge at 6-6, 306, and could become part of the rotation

"Great, great hire. He's exactly what they need. Iowa State won't have to worry about him looking for other jobs, or waiting for the next one. He cares about the place. He helped me build a foundation for the program, and I think he'll get it done."

Former Iowa State Coach Dan McCarney on Paul Rhoads

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	..... North Dakota State
Sept. 12	..... Iowa
Sept. 19	..... at Kent State
Sept. 26	..... Army
Oct. 3	..... *Kansas State
Oct. 10	..... at Kansas
Oct. 17	..... Baylor
Oct. 24	..... at Nebraska
Oct. 31	..... at Texas A&M
Nov. 7	..... Oklahoma State
Nov. 14	..... Colorado
Nov. 21	..... at Missouri

*-Kansas City

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 28	South Dakota St. ...W, 44-17
Sept. 6	Kent State.....W, 48-28
Sept. 13	at Iowa .....L, 17-5
Sept. 20	at UNLV .....L 34-31, OT
Oct. 4	Kansas.....L, 35-33
Oct. 11	at Baylor .....L, 38-10
Oct. 18	Nebraska .....L, 35-7
Oct. 25	Texas A&M.....L, 48-35
Nov. 1	at Oklahoma St. ....L, 59-17
Nov. 8	at Colorado.....L, 28-24
Nov. 15	Missouri .....L, 52-20
Nov. 22	at Kansas State ....L, 38-30

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	.....4-7
2000	.....9-3
2001	.....7-5
2002	.....7-7
2003	.....2-10
2004	.....7-5
2005	.....7-5
2006	.....4-8
2007	.....3-9
2008	.....2-10



Texas Longhorns

1st PROJECTED FINISH

It's difficult to associate the word "disappointing" with a 12-1 season that ends with a dramatic come-from-behind victory over Ohio State in the Fiesta Bowl.

However, it would be understandable if Texas coach Mack Brown and his program were still stinging from what transpired late last season. Despite their owning a 45-35 victory over Oklahoma, a last-second loss at Texas Tech denied the Longhorns a chance to represent the Big 12 South in the conference championship game, as voters in the national polls gave the nod to the Sooners, breaking a three-way tie in the division.

Oklahoma went on to capture its third consecutive Big 12 title and advanced to the BCS championship game. Nearly five months later, it seemed Brown hadn't completely come to peace with the situation and hadn't decided whether or not — if asked — he would vote in the USA Today coaches' poll this season.

"I just think we — all of us in college football — need to continue

to look at what's best for trying to crown a champion," Brown said. "I was concerned after some of the things I've seen for the last six years, and they popped up again last year."

That said, Brown insists last season will be forgotten. Getting revenge, whether it be against Oklahoma or the college football system itself, apparently won't be used as motivation for the 2009 Longhorns.

"Our goals are to win the opening game, win the Big 12 South, win the conference championship and win a bowl game every year — and hopefully that would be (for) the national

championship," said Brown, whose program owns a nation-best streak of eight consecutive 10-win seasons. "So our goals really haven't changed since we've been here."

Texas senior quarterback Colt McCoy, one of eight starters returning to the Longhorns' high-powered offense, offered a



COLT MCCOY

STRENGTHS

Texas returns eight starters, including senior quarterback **COLT MCCOY**, from an



offense that averaged 42.4 points (No. 5 nationally) and 475.8 total yards (No. 9).

The Longhorns

recorded at least 400 yards of total offense in 12 of their 13 games. Four of five starters are back on the offensive line, including tackles Kyle Hix and Adam Ulatoski, guard Charlie Tanner and center Chris Hall. Ulatoski was an All-Big 12 selection last season.

QUESTION MARKS

Defensive coordinator Will Muschamp has said that he's very concerned about the depth of defensive line, telling reporters: "We're one injury away from a tough time in there." The Longhorns lost three of four starting

defensive linemen, including star defensive end Brian Orakpo. While quarterback Colt McCoy proved he could be very effective running the football, Texas appears intent on finding a running back that can carry more of the load, but neither Vondrell McGee nor Fozzy Whittaker took the job by the throat in spring practice.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Texas has a bit of an odd schedule in 2009 with the Big 12 opener coming in game three on Sept. 19 against Texas Tech. The Longhorns don't figure to be challenged by non-conference foes Louisiana-Monroe, Wyoming, UTEP and Central Florida. UT's North Division opponents will be Colorado, Missouri and Kansas with only the Missouri game on the road. Texas plays three of its final four regular-season games at home.

similar view.

"Expectations are always high for every year," McCoy told reporters in Austin. "We expect to get to the top, and we're working for that right now. Hopefully, things will play out like they should this year."

McCoy, who was the Heisman Trophy runner-up to Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford last season, is the centerpiece around which Texas will build its national title bid. With a 32-7 record as a starter and 42 school records already to his credit, the senior is coming off a season in which he set the NCAA record for completion percentage (76.7) and had 3,859 yards



and 34 touchdowns passing, as well as accounting for a school-record 4,420 total yards.

Four offensive line starters also return, led by 2008 All-Big 12 tackle Adam Ulatoski. However, Texas offensive coordinator Greg Davis' unit is still searching to find a running game without having to expose McCoy — the team's leading ground-gainer with 561 yards and 11 TDs — to such a physical pounding.

Defensive coordinator Will Muschamp, who has been designated as the Longhorns' coach-in-waiting, returns six starters

from a unit that held all 13 opponents below their season-scoring average last year.

Linebacker Sergio Kindle may be converted to defensive end to address depth concerns on the defensive line. Second-team all-conference linebacker Rodrick Muckelroy is back, and the secondary features a pair of Freshman All-Americans in safeties Earl Thomas and Blake Gideon.

While many pieces are back in place for the Longhorns, Brown stresses that Texas lost a lot of quality seniors.

"We've got a lot of good people back, but I think (lost experience and leadership) are the question marks that we will have," Brown said. "It will not be ability."



JORDAN SHIPLEY

"There's a great passion for football in the state of Texas. There are 20 million people here; there are between 1,200 and 1,300 high schools that play football, and we've had really good continuity with our staff. Most of our coaches have been here. Most of the guys who are committing for the 2010 class were 5-years-old when we got here, so this is what they know. This is Texas football."

Texas Coach Mack Brown on having more than 20 oral commitments for the 2010 recruiting class before the end of spring practice.

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	..... Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 12	..... at Wyoming
Sept. 19	..... Texas Tech
Sept. 26	..... UTEP
Oct. 10	..... Colorado
Oct. 17	..... *vs. Oklahoma
Oct. 24	..... at Missouri
Oct. 31	..... at Oklahoma St.
Nov. 7	..... Central Florida
Nov. 14	..... at Baylor
Nov. 21	..... Kansas
Nov. 26	..... at Texas A&M
* - At Dallas	

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	Florida Atlantic	..... W, 52-10
Sept. 6	at UTEP	..... W, 42-13
Sept. 20	Rice	..... W, 52-10
Sept. 27	Arkansas	..... W, 52-10
Oct. 4	at Colorado	..... W, 38-14
Oct. 11	*vs. Oklahoma	..... W, 45-35
Oct. 18	Missouri	..... W, 56-31
Oct. 25	Oklahoma St.	..... W, 28-24
Nov. 1	at Texas Tech	..... L, 39-33
Nov. 8	Baylor	..... W, 45-21
Nov. 15	at Kansas	..... W, 35-7
Nov. 27	Texas A&M	..... W, 49-9
Jan. 5	#Ohio St.	..... W, 24-21
* - At Dallas # - Fiesta Bowl at Glendale, Ariz.		

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	..... 9-5
2000	..... 9-3
2001	..... 11-2
2002	..... 11-2
2003	..... 10-3
2004	..... 11-1
2005	..... 13-0
2006	..... 10-3
2007	..... 10-3
2008	..... 12-1

AT THE HELM

Mack Brown, 12th year at Texas, 115-26 25th year overall, 201-100-1

Brown enters the 2009 season as the only active coach in the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision who has led his teams to nine or more wins in each of the last 13 seasons. But it's not like he hasn't been rewarded: Brown received a \$100,000 off-season raise, bumping his annual salary to \$3.01 million.



KEY RETURNEES

Colt McCoy, QB

Enters his senior season with a 32-7 record as a starter and owns 42 school records, including career passing yards (9,732) and total offense (10,955).

Jordan Shipley, WR

A third-team All-American in 2008, Shipley is McCoy's top returning target with 89 receptions for 1,060 yards and 11 TDs last season.

Sergio Kindle, LB/DE

Recorded 10 sacks last season and is experimenting with making the move to defensive end to beef up the Texas pass rush.

KEY LOSSES

Brian Orakpo, DE

Winner of the Nagurski, Lombardi and Hendricks Awards in 2008, Orakpo had 11.5 sacks and was the No. 13 overall pick in the NFL draft.

Rashad Bobino, LB

Started 45 games for the Longhorns in his career and was a three-time All-Big 12 selection.

Quan Cosby, WR

The leading receiver for Texas in 2008 with 92 receptions for 1,123 yards and 10 TDs, Cosby was a two-time All-Big 12 pick.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Alex Okafor, DE

The 6-foot-4, 240-pounder enrolled early to take part in spring practice. Okafor was rated by Rivals.com as the nation's top strong-side defensive end.



Oklahoma Sooners

2nd

PROJECTED
FINISH

Envious rivals can joke all they want about Oklahoma's recent post-season struggles.

But despite losing five consecutive BCS games, the Sooners head into the 2009 season bidding for an unprecedented fourth consecutive Big 12 Conference championship and a fifth national title game appearance in 11 seasons under coach Bob Stoops. Last year's 24-14 loss to Florida in a competitive BCS championship game was evidence Oklahoma might not be that far away.

Predictably, Stoops appears to be growing weary of questions about his program's lack of bowl-game success in recent years. The Sooners are 2-5 in BCS bowls in the Stoops era and last finished the season with a victory in 2005 when they beat Oregon in the Holiday Bowl.

"Around here, it's more than just the national championship," Stoops said in an ESPN interview. "The Big 12 championship is certainly very special as well, so it begins there with us and we take a lot of pride in that.

"Of course you want to contend for national championships — this program has been in a great number of them — so that is part of what we do."

With a large contingent of full-time starters returning (eight on defense and five on offense), it seems many of the pieces are in place for Oklahoma to again contend for a national title.

Heisman Trophy winner Sam Bradford returns to lead the most prolific scoring offense in college football history. Last season as a third-year sophomore, Bradford completed 328-of-483

pass attempts (67.9 percent) for 4,720 yards and led the nation in touchdown passes (50) and passing efficiency (180.84).

"It is exciting to have him back because you know what a team player and what a leader he is," Stoops said of Bradford. "I had a similar thing with (2003 Heisman winner) Jason White as well, so



JERMAINE GRESHAM

STRENGTHS

Well, having 2008 Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback

SAM BRADFORD back in the

fold is obviously a nice place to start. The Sooners will also return perhaps the nation's best tight end in Jermaine

Gresham and have a pair of 1,000-yard rushers back in Chris Brown (1,220 yards) and DeMarco Murray (1,002). The defense, which improved as the 2008 season went along, returns most of its key cogs, including All-America defensive tackle Gerald McCoy, 2008 Big 12 pre-season defensive player of the year Austin English and record-setting linebacker Travis Lewis, who erased Brian Bosworth's OU freshman record for tackles.

QUESTION MARKS

Four starters from the offensive line who were invited to the NFL Scouting Combine are gone and

Oklahoma will look to build around All-Big 12 right tackle Trent Williams. Also on offense, the Sooners will be hard-pressed to replace receivers Juaquin Iglesias (No. 2) and Manuel Johnson, who both finished among the program's leaders in career receptions. Filling the gaps left by the departure of safeties Nic Harris and Lendy Holmes is arguably the only question mark on the defense.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

A non-conference slate of BYU, Idaho State, Tulsa and Miami (Fla.) would be a concern for most programs, but Oklahoma figures to come through unscathed if it can beat the Hurricanes on their home field. The Sooners play two of their three North Division opponents on the road at Kansas and Nebraska, while the Red River Showdown against Texas and a trip to Texas Tech could also be stumbling blocks on a schedule that includes nine bowl teams from last season.

you have a great feeling having that guy back. It makes a big difference in your program."

The Sooners scored 99 TDs last season, destroying the previous school record of 80 TDs in 2003. Oklahoma's 716 points were the most in the modern era of college football, and OU also became the first team to tally 60 or more points in five consecutive games.

To keep the offense rolling, Oklahoma must replace four starters on the offensive line, including two-time All-American guard Duke Robinson.



Stoops is hopeful the Sooners can build around All-Big 12 tackle Trent Williams.

"They had a good spring," Stoops said. "Now, we'll see

if they can have the kind of discipline and determination (over the summer) to improve. They need it.

"They're not where they need to be yet, but they could be a good group if they have the right attitude and the right work habits."

The Sooners have high hopes for a defensive unit that expects to return everyone in its front seven. All-America

defensive tackle Gerald McCoy and defensive end Auston English lead Oklahoma up front and are backed by a deep and talented linebacker corps, led by sophomore All-American candidate Travis Lewis.

"There's great, great potential and ability

up front, and I always think great defenses start off there and make the biggest impact with those front four guys and we're really experienced and have a lot of ability up there," Stoops said of his defense. "It has a chance to be a really good — one of our better ones, possibly — if they have a big summer and get prepared for it."

SAM BRADFORD



"With all the publicity and all the demands, if it were up to everybody else, he'd be occupied eight hours a day, dealing with everything else other than going to school, being a college student and being a player here. We're doing our best just to communicate with Sam (and ask), 'What do you want to do? What are you able to do?' And just trying to limit it."

Bob Stoops on limiting Sam Bradford's media obligations this season.

AT THE HELM

Bob Stoops, 11th year

109-24 (.820) all at Oklahoma

Stoops became the first coach in Big 12 history to capture three consecutive conference titles in 2008 — one year after he became the first to win two in a row — and has six league titles, four national championship game appearances and one national title (2000).



KEY RETURNEES

Sam Bradford, QB

While winning nearly every honor imaginable last season, Bradford led the nation in passing efficiency and became the first QB to win two Big 12 championship games.

Jermaine Gresham, TE

The preseason favorite to win the Mackey Award, presented annually to the nation's best tight end.

Gerald McCoy, DT

Will open the 2009 season high atop the watch lists for the Lombardi Award and the Outland trophy, both of which honor line play.

KEY LOSSES

Juaquin Iglesias, WR

Not just a go-to receiver for the Sooners, Iglesias finished with more kickoff return yards than any other player in school history.

Duke Robinson, G

The two-time All-American anchored the line for the highest-scoring offense in NCAA history in 2008.

Nic Harris, S

An All-Big 12 performer and a third-team All-American, Harris was one of the leaders for Oklahoma's play-making defense.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Mossis Madu, WR

While not new to the team — Madu was OU's third-leading rusher last year with 475 yards and six TDs — he could make a major impact this season as a slot receiver.

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5vs. BYU @Irving, Texas-
Sept. 12 Idaho St.
Sept. 19 Tulsa
Oct. 3at Miami (Fla.)
Oct. 10 Baylor
Oct. 17vs. Texas @Dallas-#
Oct. 24at Kansas
Oct. 31 Kansas St.
Nov. 7at Nebraska
Nov. 14 Texas A&M
Nov. 21at Texas Tech
Nov. 28 Oklahoma St.
*-at Dallas Cowboys Stadium;
#-at Cotton Bowl

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30 . Chattanooga..... W, 57-2
Sept. 6 .. Cincinnati W, 52-26
Sept. 13 at Washington W, 55-14
Sept. 27 TCU..... W, 35-10
Oct. 4at Baylor W, 49-17
Oct. 11 ..vs. TexasL, 45-35
Oct. 18 .. Kansas W, 45-31
Oct. 25 ..at Kansas St. . W, 58-35
Nov. 1 ... Nebraska W, 62-28
Nov. 8 ...at Texas A&M W, 66-28
Nov. 22 . Texas Tech W, 65-21
Nov. 29 .at Okla. St. W, 61-41
Dec. 6 ...vs. Missouri-\$ W, 62-21
Jan. 8vs. Florida-% ... L, 24-14
#-at Cotton Bowl at Dallas; \$-Big 12 Championship at Kansas City, Mo.; %-BCS Championship at Miami

10-YEAR RECORD

1999..... 7-5
2000..... 13-0
2001..... 11-2
2002..... 12-2
2003..... 12-2
2004..... 12-1
2005..... 8-4
2006..... 11-3
2007..... 11-3
2008..... 12-2



3rd PROJECTED FINISH

Oklahoma State Cowboys

Even with a disappointing loss to Oregon in the Holiday Bowl, Oklahoma State's 2008 season included plenty of success.

The Cowboys finished 9-4 and were ranked No. 16 in the final Associated Press Poll. It marked just the eighth time Oklahoma State has reached the nine-win mark and it was the program's highest final national ranking since the 1987 and 1988 teams both ended No. 11.

However, taking the next step in the Big 12 Conference's South Division is much easier said than done. Three of the Cowboys' four losses came to teams that were ranked No. 1 (Texas), No. 2 (Texas Tech) or No. 3 (Oklahoma) at the time the game was played and the Longhorns and Sooners both appear to be loaded again.

The common denominator in Oklahoma State's four losses was obvious as the Cowboys allowed an average of 46.8 points in those setbacks.

The task of trying to buck that trend will go to veteran defensive coordinator Bill Young. The 62-year-old Oklahoma State alum returns to Stillwater with a reputation for being a horse whisperer of sorts when it comes to fixing defenses.

Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy said Young brings a wealth of maturity and experience to the coaching staff.

"The younger coaches like me and the guys get excited a lot and at times during a competition, during a scrimmage or practice can become controversial at times — it's just part of coaching," Gundy said. "But Coach Young has been there, done that. He doesn't get

involved, goes with the flow (and) coaches his guys."

Young told reporters this spring that his philosophy is simplistic.

"I don't know if my way is the best way, but it's the way we try to get it done," Young said. "It's a game of repetition. The more you



ZAC ROBINSON

STRENGTHS

With offensive juggernauts such as Oklahoma, Texas and Texas Tech in the same

division, it's easy to get overlooked. However, Oklahoma State's ability to move the football last season



was unquestioned, and the Cowboys return eight starters from a unit that finished sixth nationally in total offense and ninth in scoring offense without a senior scoring a single point. OSU again showed remarkable offensive balance last season, finishing with 3,191 rushing yards and 3,149 passing yards. Quarterback **ZAC ROBINSON** leads the way and he has the luxury of getting back the Big 12's top receiver in Dez Bryant and top rusher in Kendall Hunter.

QUESTION MARKS

In a word: defense. Oklahoma State lost three starters in the secondary from a defensive unit that struggled mightily

to defend the high-octane passing attacks that reside in the Big 12. The complete lack of a pass rush didn't help as the Cowboys were last in the league in sacks and now must replace defensive tackles Jeray Chatham and Tonga Tea. Returning starters in defensive end Ugo Chinasa and converted defensive tackle Derek Burton must step up their production. New defensive coordinator Bill Young inherits a defense that allowed 405.5 yards and 28.1 points per game.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Oklahoma State has an opportunity to gain national attention in its Sept. 5 opener as it plays host to Georgia in Stillwater. The Cowboys have Missouri and Colorado at home and Iowa State on the road in their Big 12 North Division slate, which would seem manageable. However, there's nothing easy about being a member of the Big 12 South as OSU gets Texas and Texas Tech at home but must play Oklahoma, Texas A&M and Baylor on the road.

do something, the easier it becomes. The more things you try, the less you can repeat it. There's a Catch-22 there.

"We always use the analogy that defense is a game of reaction, and if you have to think, you can't react as fast as you need to."

Last season, Young guided a Miami (Fla.) unit that finished No. 28 nationally in total defense and was No. 7 in pass defense. Young was also the defensive coordinator for Kansas during its 12-1 breakout season in 2007.



Even after watching the Cowboys allow averages of 405.5 yards and 28.1 points per game last season, Gundy said he's confident Young can

engineer a quick turnaround.

"I think the players are buying in," Gundy said. "I think we should expect a lot from our defense and I think our players will uphold that and will play well this season."

As good as OSU was at scoring points last season (No. 9 nationally), Gundy is also seeking more from his offense. With eight starters returning, including

senior quarterback Zac Robinson and the Big 12 receiving leader (Dez Bryant) and rushing leader (Kendall Hunter), improvement isn't an unrealistic expectation.

"We have to become a better third-down passing team, and we actually have to rush the

ball better," Gundy said.

"We rushed for a lot of yards, but part of it was because we had a great running back that made people miss. We need to become a better downhill running team — more physical.

"We got into the bowl game and Oregon was more physical than we were in the fourth quarter, and we want to try to keep that from happening again."



DEZ BRYANT

"It makes it a lot easier to draw up plays on offense, that's for sure, but I think the leadership and the guidance that he gives our football team — not only offensively but his work ethic that he demonstrates in the off-season in the summer in preparing for the first game — can be as much of an impact as what he does when he lines up in September."

OSU Coach Mike Gundy on having quarterback Zac Robinson back for another year

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Georgia
Sept. 12	Houston
Sept. 19	Rice
Sept. 26	Grambling St.
Oct. 10	at Texas A&M
Oct. 17	Missouri
Oct. 24	at Baylor
Oct. 31	Texas
Nov. 7	at Iowa St.
Nov. 14	Texas Tech
Nov. 19	Colorado
Nov. 28	at Oklahoma

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30 at Washington St.	W, 39-13
Sept. 6 Houston	W, 56-36
Sept. 13 Missouri St.	W, 57-13
Sept. 27 Troy	W, 55-24
Oct. 4 Texas A&M	W, 56-28
Oct. 11 at Missouri	W, 28-23
Oct. 18 Baylor	W, 34-6
Oct. 25 at Texas	L, 28-24
Nov. 1 Iowa St.	W, 59-17
Nov. 8 at Texas Tech	L, 56-20
Nov. 15 at Colorado	W, 30-17
Nov. 29 Oklahoma	L, 61-41
Dec. 30 Oregon*	L, 42-31

*Holiday Bowl at San Diego

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	5-6
2000	3-8
2001	4-7
2002	8-5
2003	9-4
2004	7-5
2005	4-7
2006	7-6
2007	7-6
2008	9-4

AT THE HELM

Mike Gundy, 5th year

27-23 (.540) all at Oklahoma State

The former QB enters his fifth season at his alma mater. The Cowboys are 23-16 over the past three seasons and their No. 16 final ranking last season marked their first top 25 since 1997. Gundy agreed on a new seven-year contract last December that runs through the 2015 season.



KEY RETURNEES

Dez Bryant, WR

The Walter Camp first-team All-American returns for his junior season after leading the Big 12 with 1,480 yards receiving, averaging 17 yards per catch.

Kendall Hunter, RB

Associated Press third-team All-American and a first-team All-Big 12 coaches selection after leading the league with 1,555 yards rushing and 16 TDs.

Zac Robinson, QB

Ranked third in Big 12 passing efficiency behind only Heisman Trophy winner Sam Bradford of Oklahoma and Heisman runner-up Colt McCoy of Texas.

KEY LOSSES

Brandon Pettigrew, TE

A first-round selection in the NFL draft as the No. 20 overall pick by the Detroit Lions. Pettigrew had 42 receptions for 472 yards in 2008.

David Washington, C

The second-team All-Big 12 selection (coaches) anchored the offensive line, which will also lose starter Steve Denning.

Matt Fodge, P

Won the Ray Guy Award, presented annually to the nation's top punter. Fodge averaged 42.9 yards, and 17 of his punts were downed inside the opponents' 20-yard line.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Donald Booker, LB

Was the Cowboys' seventh-leading tackler last year despite not starting a game. Booker is looking to expand his role beyond special teams in 2009.



Texas Tech Red Raiders

4th PROJECTED FINISH

In recent years, Texas Tech coach Mike Leach has turned the typically anxiety-ridden procedure of breaking in new quarterbacks into an art form.

While other programs often struggle when top-flight signal-callers depart, it's practically been a plug-and-play situation for the Red Raiders. Consider that the previous four Texas Tech first-year starting quarterbacks averaged 4,842 yards passing in their debut seasons.

So in Lubbock, Texas, the question isn't who's going to be the next starting quarterback, but rather who's going to be the next national passing leader?

The answer, apparently, is junior Taylor Potts. The 6-foot-5, 215-pounder emerged from spring practice with a steady hold on the starting quarterback spot after completing 20-of-27 pass attempts for 211 yards in windy conditions during Tech's spring game.

"I think Taylor had a very good spring – comparable with our last three years," Leach said. "He just needs to continue to develop, not just his experience, but also the players around him.

"They just need to get used to responding to him and those little extra things where you know what to expect from somebody."

The bad news for future opponents is that Potts actually has more experience than any of Leach's previous first-year quarterbacks, appearing in 10 games last season. He completed 23-of-36 pass attempts for 260 yards and two touchdowns in mop-up duty for starter Graham Harrell.

"He's bigger than the quarterbacks we've had and has a stronger arm than most," Leach said of Potts. "And like a lot of them in the past, he had several years to learn and play behind some good people.

"A lot of times as they are sitting and waiting their chance, guys will waste their opportunities to learn. Taylor didn't do that."

Potts doesn't sound too concerned about the debate over



BARON BATCH

STRENGTHS

Despite the departure of record-setting quarterback Graham Harrell and star wide receiver Michael Crabtree, Texas Tech coach Mike Leach always seems to find a way to keep the Red Raiders' high-powered



attacking humming. Leading rusher **BARON BATCH** is back after averaging nearly seven yards per carry, and four receivers with 35 receptions or more in 2008 are slated to return to break in new quarterback Taylor Potts. Starting linebackers Brian Duncan, Bront Bird and Marlon Williams all return.

QUESTION MARKS

Just two starters on the offensive line return in Brandon Carter and Marlon Winn. Texas Tech lost a pair of standout safeties as Darcel McBath and Daniel Charbonnet completed their eligibility. There's also concern up front as top pass rusher Brandon Williams

exited early to enter the NFL draft and fellow defensive end McKinner Dixon, who is the team's top returner in terms of sacks with nine, was suspended indefinitely during spring drills for academic reasons. The status of his return is questionable, according to Leach.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Texas Tech's non-conference schedule has been criticized for its lack of bite in recent years and a slate of North Dakota, Rice, Houston and New Mexico will probably do little to reverse the trend. However, facing Rice the week before the oddly situated Texas game and traveling to Houston the following week could bring about some potential pitfalls. As previously noted, the Red Raiders get an early jump on the Big 12 season, opening against Texas on Sept. 19. TTU has to travel north to face Nebraska, but gets its other two North Division foes (Kansas State and Kansas) at home.

whether or not he can continue the string of prolific-passing quarterbacks at Tech.

"I really don't know what people are thinking," Potts told the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal. "I try not to listen to a lot of people, what they're saying, this and that. We're going to have a good team. That's about all I know."

The status of the defense could perhaps be a larger concern for the Red Raiders. Gone are all-conference free safeties Darcel McBath and Daniel Charbonnet, along with 2008 Big 12 leading pass rusher Brandon Williams



(13 sacks), who left school early to enter the NFL Draft.

Tech's second-leading pass rusher, McKinner Dixon with nine sacks last season, has been suspended indefinitely for academic reasons. Leach said Dixon's return is questionable.

That's not good news for Leach's program, which could be hard-pressed to repeat last year's success in the salty Big 12 South. The Red Raiders posted an 11-2 record and finished in a three-way tie atop the division with perennial powers Oklahoma and Texas.

Texas Tech climbed to No. 2 in the national

polls after its dramatic 39-33 victory over top-ranked Texas and improved to 10-0 with a home win over Oklahoma State the following week. Even though the Red Raiders lost two of their last three games, including a 65-21 setback at Oklahoma and a 47-34 loss to Mississippi in the Cotton Bowl, it seemed Leach's program finally started receiving more attention from the national media.

"I feel like it has increased some — it's kind of hard to gauge," Leach said. "People call me as they do and I just sort of answer questions. We've always had a certain amount of attention, but I think it has increased some."



BRIAN DUNCAN

"I don't fully understand those things. Allegedly, I have two (Facebook accounts) myself, of which I can't get on, mainly because I have nothing to do with them and don't know the password to my own alleged Facebooks."

Texas Tech Coach Mike Leach *on the need for modern-day coaches to become more tech-savvy*

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	..... North Dakota
Sept. 12	..... Rice
Sept. 19	..... at Texas
Sept. 26	..... at Houston
Oct. 3	..... New Mexico
Oct. 10	..... Kansas St.
Oct. 17	..... at Nebraska
Oct. 24	..... Texas A&M
Oct. 31	..... Kansas
Nov. 14	..... at Oklahoma State
Nov. 21	..... Oklahoma
Nov. 28	..... *Baylor

*-at Arlington, Texas

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	E. Washington..... W, 49-24
Sept. 6	at Nevada..... W, 35-19
Sept. 13	SMU..... W, 43-7
Sept. 20	Massachusetts..... W, 56-14
Oct. 4	at Kansas St..... W, 58-28
Oct. 11	Nebraska..... W, 37-31 (OT)
Oct. 18	at Texas A&M..... W, 43-25
Oct. 25	at Kansas..... W, 63-21
Nov. 1	Texas..... W, 39-33
Nov. 8	Oklahoma St..... W, 56-20
Nov. 22	at Oklahoma..... L, 65-21
Nov. 29	Baylor..... W, 35-28
Jan. 2	Mississippi*..... L, 47-34

*Cotton Bowl at Dallas

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	..... 11-1
2000	..... 11-1
2001	..... 8-4
2002	..... 10-4
2003	..... 8-5
2004	..... 10-3
2005	..... 10-3
2006	..... 10-3
2007	..... 11-3
2008	..... 10-4

AT THE HELM

Mike Leach, 10th year (76-39), all at Texas Tech

After sometimes-contentious contract negotiations, Leach agreed to an extension in that would keep him as the Red Raiders' head coach through the 2013 season. Leach has guided Tech to a bowl game in each of his first nine seasons and needs only seven more victories to surpass Spike Dykes' program-record 82 coaching wins.



KEY RETURNEES

Detron Lewis, WR

The second-leading receiver for the Red Raiders in 2008 behind Crabtree with 76 receptions for 913 yards and three TDs.

Baron Batch, RB

Texas Tech's leading rusher last season with 758 yards while averaging 6.7 yards per carry. Batch also caught 45 passes for 449 yards.

Brian Duncan, LB

The top returning tackler with 94 total stops after moving to the middle linebacker position last season. Duncan also had two interceptions.

KEY LOSSES

Graham Harrell, QB

Owner of the NCAA record with 134 career touchdown passes, Harrell threw for 15,793 yards in his three seasons as a starter.

Michael Crabtree, WR

A two-time Biletnikoff Award winner as the best receiver in the country, Crabtree bypassed his senior season and was drafted No. 10 overall by San Francisco.

Brandon Williams, DE

The reigning Big 12 Conference sacks leader with 13 last season, Williams left school early to enter the NFL draft.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Alex Torres, WR

Torres was attending Air Force Academy prep school but fractured a hand and couldn't complete basic training. Now, he's competing for playing time at wide receiver.



Baylor Bears

5th PROJECTED FINISH

The progress the Baylor football program has made since Art Briles arrived in December of 2007 is difficult for the Bears' head coach to quantify.

With nine starters returning on both sides of the football in 2009, Baylor fans are hopeful this could be the season the program ends its 14-year bowl drought. If the Bears reach the post-season, it will likely be riding on the wings of 2008 freshman All-America quarterback Robert Griffin and All-Big 12 Conference defenders Joe Pawelek and Jordan Lake.

"A year ago, we were just trying to learn names and fit personnel where they fit into our system and gave us the best opportunity to win football games," Briles said. "From the standpoint of understanding our personnel and them being familiar with us schematically, we're a football team right now."

"Last year, we were trying to become a football team, so we're miles ahead of where we were a year ago at this time."

Last year's 4-8 finish for the Bears could be considered deceptive.

Playing a schedule that included eight bowl teams, six of Baylor's losses came against ranked teams, including four against top-eight foes. The Bears put major scares into Nebraska, Missouri and Texas Tech before losing those contests.

"What we did last year was I think we earned some respect and credibility," Briles said. "Now, we've got to go to the next level. It has got to be a situation where every time we step on the field we expect to win, our players expect to win, our program expects to win and our university expects to win."

"The only way we're going to get that is to win those close games and cross a few of those bridges."

Once Griffin began establishing himself as the starting quarterback, Baylor appeared to make almost weekly improvement. A world-class hurdler, the 19-year-old Griffin



ROBERT GRIFFIN

STRENGTHS

Baylor returns players who accounted for 91.2 percent of its 4,517 yards of total offense



last season, led by sophomore quarterback

ROBERT GRIFFIN.

A freshman All-American in

2008, Griffin was one of the top dual-threat signal-callers in the country last season, passing for 2,091 yards and 15 touchdowns and also rushing for 843 yards and 13 scores. Griffin isn't the only rushing threat in the Baylor backfield as Jay Finley gained a team-high 865 yards on the ground. Baylor finished No. 21 nationally in rushing offense.

QUESTION MARKS

Not many questions, at least in terms of players. Baylor returns its most starters (nine on offense, nine on defense and two on special teams) since 1969. However, junior college transfer Danny Watkins (left tackle) and redshirted freshman

Cameron Kaufhold (right tackle) certainly face a tall order in trying to fill the shoes of departed All-America left tackle Jason Smith and his bookend Dan Gay at right tackle. Baylor struggled with pass defense in 2008, which was partially attributed to the fact that the Bears were 109th nationally in sacks. Baylor hasn't won a road game since September of 2007 at Buffalo.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Baylor will face eight teams coming off bowl appearances for the third consecutive season. The good news about Baylor's non-conference schedule is that three of the four contests are at home, but the season opener at Wake Forest and the home opener against Connecticut certainly aren't gimmies. Baylor's North Division schedule includes games at Iowa State and at Missouri with a home contest against Nebraska. The Nov. 28 regular-season finale will be played at the new Dallas Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

bypassed participating in track and field this spring in hopes of improving on a debut season in which he completed 59.9 percent of his passes for 2,091 yards with 15 touchdowns and just three interceptions. He also rushed for 843 yards and 13 TDs.

With his sole athletic focus on football, Griffin has set a goal of adding 10 pounds of muscle before the start of the 2009 season.



"I feel stronger and more explosive," Griffin told the Waco Tribune-Herald. "By gaining more strength, I think it will help me stay healthy."

"When guys try to arm-tackle me, I'll be able to get away from them more easily."

Almost the entire defensive unit returns, including the Pawelek-led linebacker corps. While Lake is one of the conference's top safeties, Pawelek is the heart and soul of Baylor's defense from his middle linebacker position. Last season, the Academic All-American was the



JOE PAWELEK

nation's only player to finish among the top 10 in both tackles (seventh) and interceptions (seventh) per game.

"There's not any person in the United States of America that I would rather have look at the other 10 guys in our defensive huddle than Joe Pawelek," Briles said.

"The things that he's done on the field speak for themselves, but the way he prepares and the way he conducts himself off the field, it's unparalleled."

"He and a few others on our team are the ones who inspire me and us as a staff as a team to get us to the next level, which for us right now, is to become a bowl-eligible football team."

"We could get a room full of the smartest marketers in Texas and say, 'Hey, what's the best way we can market Baylor University?' And we couldn't come up with a better scenario. Jason Smith is a great person who represents a great university and it's nothing but positives for Baylor. What we need to do is take that and use it and continue to climb as a football program with the publicity that he's given us."

Art Briles on Bears tackle Jason Smith, who was the No. 2 selection by the St. Louis Rams in the 2009 NFL Draft.

AT THE HELM

Art Briles, 2nd year at Baylor (4-8, .333); 7th year overall (38-36, .514)

Last season marked just the second time in Briles' six years as a head coach that his team didn't qualify for a bowl game. However, six of Baylor's eight losses came against ranked opponents with four of them ranked in the top 10. The Bears also had three losses by seven points or less.



KEY RETURNEES

Robert Griffin, QB

The sophomore-to-be developed into a major weapon for the Bears last season, either running or passing the ball on 440 of Baylor's 771 offensive snaps.

Joe Pawelek, MLB

The All-Big 12 first-team selection finished seventh nationally in tackles per game last season (10.7) and had six interceptions.

Jordan Lake, FS

The hard-hitting fifth-year senior is a Thorpe Award candidate. Lake had 97 tackles in 2008, earning him first-team All-Big 12 honors.

KEY LOSSES

Jason Smith, T

An All-American at Baylor, Smith is projected to do even bigger things in the pro ranks as the St. Louis Rams selected him No. 2 overall in the NFL Draft.

Dan Gay, T

Received All-Big 12 honorable mention as he and Smith anchored an offensive line that formed a security blanket for QB Robert Griffin during his freshman year.

Vincent Rhodes, DT

Started all 12 games at defensive tackle in 2008, recording 4.5 tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Danny Watkins, T

The junior-college transfer arrived in the spring and is slated to start at left tackle. A Canadian, the 6-foot-5, 295-pound Watkins never played a down of high school football.

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5.....at Wake Forest
Sept. 19.....Connecticut
Sept. 26.....Northwestern St.
Oct. 3.....Kent St.
Oct. 10.....at Oklahoma
Oct. 17.....at Iowa St.
Oct. 24.....Oklahoma St.
Oct. 31.....Nebraska
Nov. 7.....at Missouri
Nov. 14.....Texas
Nov. 21.....at Texas A&M
Nov. 28.....*Texas Tech

*-at Arlington, Texas

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 28 Wake Forest.....L, 41-13
Sept. 6 Northwestern St. . W, 51-6
Sept. 12 Washington St. W, 45-17
Sept. 19 at Connecticut...L, 31-28
Oct. 5 Oklahoma.....L, 49-17
Oct. 11 Iowa St. W, 38-10
Oct. 18 at Oklahoma St....L, 34-6
Oct. 25 at Nebraska.....L, 32-20
Nov. 1 MissouriL, 31-28
Nov. 8 at TexasL, 45-21
Nov. 15 Texas A&M W, 41-21
Nov. 29 at Texas Tech.....L, 35-28

10-YEAR RECORD

1999.....1-10
2000.....2-9
2001.....3-8
2002.....3-9
2003.....3-9
2004.....3-8
2005.....5-6
2006.....4-8
2007.....3-9
2008.....4-8



6th PROJECTED
FINISH

Texas A&M Aggies

This year's fall camp could be an eventful one at Texas A&M as coach Mike Sherman has made it clear that several members of the Aggies' 2009 recruiting class will get an immediate opportunity to earn playing time.

Sherman is bringing in a 28-member class that was ranked No. 22 nationally by recruiting Web site Rivals.com. And after last year's 4-8 record, it's obvious that almost every position is open for competition.

"We're counting on having a fair amount of those freshmen come in and help us and be a part of our offense and defense and special teams, and we expect them to play a key role in the season," Sherman said. "Certainly, it was nothing that was in our control, but I would've loved to have had an opportunity to have them out there (during spring practice) because they will play a factor in the upcoming season."

That could especially be the case on defense. The Aggies ranked No. 114 in the country in both yards (461.9) and points (37.4) allowed per game, so defensive coordinator Joe Kines said he has encouraged A&M's 16 defensive recruits to come to fall camp fit and ready to compete.

"I gave them a couple of words of advice: run and get in shape," Kines told the Bryan-College Station Eagle. "If you want to play, come in shape, because you're really going to get a chance. You're really going to get a chance."

Texas A&M has six players returning on defense with starting experience. Middle linebacker Matt Featherston leads the way, coming off a

junior season where he tied for the team lead with 94 tackles.

The Aggies are looking to combat their inability to get pressure on opposing quarterbacks by moving Von Miller from linebacker to defensive end, where his pass-rushing abilities can be better utilized. Senior cornerback Jordan Pugh returns with 25 career starts to a secondary that also includes part-time

STRENGTHS

Texas A&M landed a highly regarded recruiting class in February and Sherman said

he thinks several of those players could have an impact right away. If nothing else, the threat of competition from within should help

motivate the veterans to get their work in prior to the start of fall camp. Leading receivers **RYAN TANNEHILL** — also the backup quarterback — and Jeff Fuller return and Jerrod Johnson should be more settled in at QB after playing in 12 games last season.

QUESTION MARKS

Both the offensive and defensive lines were a major source of disappointment in 2008. A&M's defensive line failed to mount a consistent pass rush and the Aggies allowed a Big 12-worst 37.4 points and 461.9 yards per game last season. Offensively, A&M gave up 39 sacks and averaged

just 2.9 yards per rush as a team, despite having an NFL fourth-round draft choice at running back in Mike Goodson. Unfortunately for the Aggies, offensive linemen Lee Grimes, Kevin Matthews and Lucas Patterson all sat out the spring game with injuries. Better special teams play is a must after finishing 10th on kickoff returns and 11th on punt returns in the conference.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

Texas A&M eases into its 2009 season with non-conference games against New Mexico, Utah State and Alabama-Birmingham before facing its first true test on Oct. 3 against Arkansas in the new Dallas Cowboys Stadium at Arlington, Texas. The Aggies play Kansas State, Iowa State and Colorado in the North Division with only the Cyclones coming to visit College Station. A rough closing stretch looms as A&M finishes at Oklahoma and against Baylor and Texas at home.



RYAN TANNEHILL

starters Trent Hunter and Terrence Frederick.

Nine offensive starters return, not including former starting defensive tackle Lucas Patterson, who is trying to make the transition to left tackle before the start of next season. That could be a lot to ask, considering Patterson sat out much of spring practice with an injury.

"We're banking on the fact that he's going to be able to step in and



protect the quarterback's blind side with relatively few reps this spring," Sherman said. "We worked him a little bit the last practice in a non-

contact situation, going against (Miller) — exclusively — just so he could match up against his quickness."

If the Patterson experiment is successful, that could equal more time in the pocket for second-year quarterback Jerrod Johnson. Last season, Johnson completed 194-of-326 pass attempts (59.5 percent) for 2,435 yards and 21 touchdowns with 10 interceptions, but has improved greatly in his

knowledge of the offense.

Despite what transpired last season and what could shape up to be another difficult season ahead, Sherman said he remains upbeat.

"I'm still very optimistic that we can get to where we want to get in a relatively short amount of time because of what A&M is all about and our ability to recruit here," Sherman said. "This is one of the reasons why I was interested in the job when it was offered to me.

"It is a great school to sell to any kid or parent who wants a great education in the Big 12 and have great fan support."



"It's a situation where we're kind of trying to find our way, so to speak, and our identity and how we fit into things. It is a challenge, but I knew that coming in. It wasn't a surprise to me. I knew from my NFL experience and watching tapes the level of coaching and also the level of talent that was in the Big 12 South."

Texas A&M Coach Mike Sherman *on competing in the division*

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	..... New Mexico
Sept. 19	..... Utah St.
Sept. 26	..... Ala.-Birmingham
Oct. 3	..... *Arkansas
Oct. 10	..... Oklahoma St.
Oct. 17	..... at Kansas St.
Oct. 24	..... at Texas Tech
Oct. 31	..... Iowa St.
Nov. 7	..... at Colorado
Nov. 14	..... at Oklahoma
Nov. 21	..... Baylor
Nov. 26	..... Texas

*-at Arlington, Texas

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	Arkansas St. ....L, 18-14
Sept. 6	at New Mexico... W, 28-22
Sept. 20	Miami (Fla.) ....L, 41-23
Sept. 27	Army W, 21-17
Oct. 4	at Oklahoma St. ....L, 56-28
Oct. 11	Kansas St. ....L, 44-30
Oct. 18	Texas Tech .....L, 43-25
Oct. 25	at Iowa St. W, 49-35
Nov. 1	Colorado W, 24-17
Nov. 8	Oklahoma .....L, 66-28
Nov. 15	at Baylor .....L, 41-21
Nov. 27	at Texas .....L, 49-9

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	..... 8-4
2000	..... 7-5
2001	..... 8-4
2002	..... 6-6
2003	..... 4-8
2004	..... 7-5
2005	..... 5-6
2006	..... 9-5
2007	..... 7-6
2008	..... 4-8

AT THE HELM

Mike Sherman, 2nd year
4-8 (.333) all at Texas A&M

His first full season as the head coach in College Station behind him, Sherman perhaps has a better understanding of what it will take to turn Texas A&M around. The Aggies appeared depleted on both the offensive and defensive lines last season as they finished 4-8, marking the program's worst record since 2003.



KEY RETURNEES

Jerrod Johnson, QB

After taking over for the injured Stephen McGee as A&M's starting quarterback, Johnson completed 59.5 percent of his pass attempts for 2,435 yards and 21 TDs.

Ryan Tannehill, WR/QB

A&M's leading receiver last season with 55 catches for 844 yards and five TDs. He could also compete for starting quarterback duties.

Matt Featherston, LB

Tied Alton Dixon for the team lead with 94 total tackles in 2008. Featherston was far and away the team leader in solo tackles with 60.

KEY LOSSES

Mike Goodson, RB

Led the Aggies with 406 yards rushing last season and finished his career with 1,964 yards rushing and 860 yards receiving.

Alton Dixon, DB

Tied for the team lead by registering 94 tackles, including two tackles for loss, from his position in the secondary.

Justin Brantly, P

When you struggle to move the football like the Aggies did last season, having a good punter is a must. Brantly was third nationally, averaging 45.7 yards.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Lucas Patterson, T

While he may not be new to the program, Patterson is new to the offense where he'll try to make the conversion from defensive tackle to left tackle.



Florida Atlantic Owls

In 1998, Howard Schnellenberger took on one of the biggest challenges of his life when he signed up to be the first head football coach at Florida Atlantic University.

Before Schnellenberger, there was no Florida Atlantic football program. Now, 10 years later, he leads a program that has won two bowl games in its three seasons at the NCAA's Bowl Subdivision level.

The Owls defeated Central Michigan 24-21 in the Motor City Bowl last season. That victory ended a season that saw the Owls lose five of their first six games before winning six of their last seven.

But their 7-6 record, including a 4-3 record in Sun Belt Conference play, wasn't what the Owls were hoping for after winning the conference in 2007. The Owls lost to conference opponents Middle Tennessee State, conference champion Troy and Arkansas State.

"We know what it was like to win the conference, and we know what it's like not to win the conference," senior quarterback Rusty Smith told FAUOwlAccess.com. "We really are disappointed in how we handled ourselves last season, coming out really sloppy, losing three games in conference that we shouldn't have lost, but it was our own fault."

Smith, who has started since midway through his freshman season, is going to need to put up big numbers if the Owls are to improve on last year's record, but he may well be up to the task. He already holds school records for passing attempts, completions, yards,

touchdowns and total yards rushing and passing. He will direct an offense that might have to carry the load as the defense, which returns just three starters, develops.

The Owls lost three starting offensive linemen and their top two running backs from last year, but their entire receiving corps

STRENGTHS

Quarterback Rusty Smith holds school records for passing attempts,

completions, yards, touchdowns and total yards. This will be his fourth season as quarterback for the



Owls. Coach **HOWARD**

SCHNELLENBERGER

named him the starter midway through his freshman season and he's been there ever since. That decision has paid off for Schnellenberger and the Owls. Smith also has all of his favorite receiving targets back from last season, including senior Cortez Gent, who had 60 catches for 935 yards and nine touchdowns. Senior tight end Jamari Grant had 45 catches for 642 yards and four touchdowns in 2008.

QUESTION MARKS

Who's going to carry the ball this season? Last year's leading rusher, Charles Pierre, graduated. Senior

Jeff Blanchard, who was expected to take over for Pierre, suffered a knee injury during spring practice. Now it looks as if redshirted junior Willie Floyd might be the starter, but he could be challenged by sophomore Avionne Rolle. The Owls also must replace linebacker Frantz Joseph, the school record-holder for tackles in a season and in a career.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

The Owls have their work cut out for them when they start their season on Sept. 5 at Nebraska and then travel to South Carolina. The Owls also have a non-conference game against Wyoming before diving full tilt into Sun Belt Conference play. They play two of their tougher conference games on the road against defending league champion Troy and runner-up Louisiana-Lafayette. FAU will spend much of the season on the road, in fact. The Owls have just four home games while playing eight away from 20,000-seat Lockhart Stadium.

returns. The offensive line will be a work in progress for a while as the Owls try to replace those three starters. Starting right guard David Matlock returns, but he missed the spring with an injury.

"We need to put the players in place to give our most experienced players the best chance to settle in their best position for them and the best position for the team," Schnellenberger said.

The Owls showed some explosive offensive ability in the spring game



RUSTY SMITH



with two long touchdown runs and another that was called back because of a penalty. Running back Avionne Rolle had a 60-yard scoring run and wide receiver Chris Bonner scored on a 60-yard reverse.

"Explosive plays are something that (offensive coordinator Darryl) Jackson stresses in offensive meetings," Smith told FAUOwlAccess.com. "Explosive plays are what Coach Jackson calls them – plays 25 yards or longer – and it kills a defense's momentum. Their morale goes down. It's just human nature."

On defense, the Owls will have to replace three starting linebackers. Edward Bradwell and Michael Lockley weren't

starters, but each saw plenty of playing time in 2008 and should be ready to step in this season. Redshirted freshmen Alex Pattee and Yourhighness Morgan could well battle for starting linebacker positions in the fall, too.

The defensive line also must be rebuilt, and it didn't help any that defensive end Daniel Joseph missed the entire spring with a shoulder injury.



WILLIAM ROSE

All in all, Schnellenberger is optimistic about the upcoming season even though the Owls have more question marks than at any time in the past few years.

"We've got some strong blocks of granite to replace the graduates," Schnellenberger told FAUOwlAccess.com. "There is really more physical talent than we've had in the last few years."

AT THE HELM

Howard Schnellenberger, 9th year, 48-48 at Florida Atlantic 148-125-3 overall
Nebraska fans should remember Schnellenberger. He was the coach at Miami when the Hurricanes upset the Huskers 31-30 in the 1984 Orange Bowl game. He also coached Oklahoma for one year in 1995. The Huskers defeated the Sooners 37-0 that season.



KEY RETURNEES

Rusty Smith, QB

The 6-foot-5, 212-pound, fifth-year senior was the MVP of the Motor City Bowl after completing 20-of-35 passes for 306 yards and two touchdowns.

William Rose, FB

Showed his versatility with 308 yards rushing and 23 receptions for 168 yards in 2008.

Josh Savidge, DL

Came back from a 2007 knee injury and solidified the defensive line in 2008.

KEY LOSSES

Frantz Joseph, LB

The transfer from Boston College was credited with a school-record 154 tackles last season and also finished as the school record-holder for tackles in a career.

Charles Pierre, RB

Led the Owls in rushing and was their first 1,000-yard rusher with 1014 yards.

Greg Joseph, DB

Was credited with 102 tackles as a senior.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Yourhighness Morgan, LB

The 6-3, 225-pound redshirted freshman saw plenty of playing time with the No. 1 defense during spring practice. As a high school senior in Webster, Fla., he was credited with 91 tackles in only seven games. At least one recruiting service ranked him among the nation's top 50 linebacker prospects.

"This off-season, a lot of people were hungrier. They were anxious to get back. A lot of players were working on things they could improve on. I saw a lot more film study and things like that."

Senior tight end Jamari Grant on Florida Atlantic's offseason

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5 at Nebraska
Sept. 19 at South Carolina
Sept. 26 ULM
Oct. 3 Wyoming
Oct. 17 at North Texas
Oct. 24 at ULL
Oct. 31 Middle Tennessee
Nov. 7 at UAB
Nov. 14 Arkansas State
Nov. 21 at Troy
Nov. 28 Western Kentucky
Dec. 5 at Fla. International

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30 at Texas L, 52-10
Sept. 6 UAB W, 49-34
Sept. 13 Michigan State L, 17-0
Sept. 20 Minnesota L, 37-3
Sept. 30 Mid. Tennessee L, 14-13
Oct. 7 Troy L, 30-17
Oct. 18 at W. Kentucky W, 24-20
Oct. 25 La. Monroe W, 29-28
Nov. 8 North Texas W, 45-13
Nov. 15 La.-Lafayette W, 40-29
Nov. 22 Arkansas St. L, 28-14
Nov. 29 Fla. Internat'l W, 57-50
Dec. 26 C. Michigan W, 24-21*

*-Motor City Bowl

10-YEAR RECORD

1999: no program
2000: no program
2001 4-6
2002 2-9
2003 11-3
2004 9-3
2005 2-9
2006 5-7
2007 8-5
2008 7-6



Arkansas State Red Wolves

Arkansas State coach Steve Roberts is cautiously optimistic heading into the 2009 season.

Roberts likes what he saw from his team during spring practice, but at the same time, he understands that the Red Wolves could face some problems with depth.

"That's one of the things I learned for sure," he told the Jonesboro Sun when asked to evaluate his team based on what he saw during spring practice. "We have to stay healthy at some key spots, and we were able to do that with some of the guys that could go, but the guys who were out, we have to get those guys back to have the best team that we can possibly have."

The Red Wolves, who were 6-6 overall and 4-3 in Sun Belt Conference play, went through the spring without some key players. Linebacker Javon McKinnon and cornerback Daylan Walker were among the players hampered by injuries in the spring.

Arkansas State may well call on a number of sophomores

and redshirted freshmen to fill out the two-deeps this season. Redshirted freshman Ryan Aplin could be No. 2 at quarterback, but the top spot is solidly filled by senior Corey Leonard.

Leonard broke his own school record with 2,863 yards of total offense last season. He also tied his own school record with 16 touchdown passes and a career-high 2,347 yards. Leonard's 40 career touchdown passes are the second most in school history and the fifth most ever in the Sun Belt Conference. Leonard is a good bet to break the school record of 48 set by Cleo Lemon

(1997-2000).

"Corey had by far the best spring he's ever had," Roberts told the Sun. "He played better than he has since he's been here, fall or spring, with his performances this spring."

Leonard completed 29-of-54 passes for 355 yards in four



DEREK LAWSON

STRENGTHS

The Red Wolves are in good shape at quarterback with senior Corey Leonard leading



the way. They also have All-Sun Belt Conference running back

**REGGIE
ARNOLD**

returning to carry

the load in the running game.

Arkansas State should be solid in the backfield. Not only does Johnson return, but also No.

2 tailback Derek Lawson, who rushed for 695 yards and four touchdowns as a freshman last season. The Red Wolves also return eight defensive starters.

QUESTION MARKS

The offensive line may be the biggest area of concern for coach Steve Roberts. Arkansas State lost four linemen who saw regular playing time, including four-time All-Sun Belt selection Matt Mandich and second-team All-Sun Belt tackle Mark

Clemons. The Red Wolves redshirted most of their 2008 recruiting class. Now a number of those redshirted freshmen may get a chance to play this season. Specifically, Roberts says redshirted freshmen might contribute at receiver, on the offensive line, the defensive line and at linebacker. The coaching staff is high on the Red Wolves' 2008 recruits, but they are still freshmen with no game experience.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

The Red Wolves will battle BCS teams in their non-conference schedule, three of them on the road. They play host to Mississippi State of the SEC on Sept. 5, play at Nebraska on Sept. 12, at Iowa of the Big 10 on Oct. 3 and at Louisville on Oct. 31. In addition, they open Sun Belt Conference play at defending league champion Troy on Sept. 26, so it could be a rough start to the season for the Red Wolves.

scrimmages this spring.

"Overall I was really, really excited about the strides that I made," Leonard told the Sun. "I was even more excited about the strides the team made. This team has come a long way from our first practice."

Leonard will have plenty of receivers from whom to choose this season. The Red Wolves return most of their receiving corps including seniors



Brandon Thompkins, Jahbari McLennan, Jarriel Norman and Taylor Clements.

Redshirted freshman Andre Smith, who also is battling for the back-up quarterback spot, may get some plays at wide receiver.

The running game should be in good shape, too, with senior Reggie Arnold and sophomore Derek Lawson back this season. Arnold went over 1,000 yards rushing for the third year in a row in 2008 while Lawson rushed for 695 yards as the No. 2 tailback.

The defensive line

should be a strength, with the Red Wolves returning three of their top four linemen, including Sun Belt Conference defensive player of the year Alex Carrington at defensive end.

The Red Wolves must replace linebacker Ben Owens, who was last year's leading



ALEX CARRINGTON

tackler. ASU lost just one player out of the secondary. Roberts said ASU might also look at nickel back Marcus Brown at corner.

"I feel like we're going to have the ability to make some plays offensively and do some things defensively to give some people some problems. I'm looking forward to 2009," Roberts said.

AT THE HELM

Steve Roberts, 7th year, 37-47

84-82 overall

"I Will" became the rallying cry for the Red Wolves when Roberts took over the program in 2001. He has led the Red Wolves to their best seven-year record since 1985-91 and was named the 2005 Sun Belt Conference coach of the year.



KEY RETURNEES

Reggie Arnold, RB

Has rushed for over 3,000 yards in his career, was second in the Sun Belt Conference in rushing last season, averaging 89.5 yards per game.

Josh Arauco, K

Was a 2008 Groza Award finalist after making a school record 15 consecutive field goals, ranked No. 14 nationally in kick scoring last season, has made a school-record 44 field goals during his career.

Alex Carrington, DE

On the Lott Trophy Watch List and the preliminary Lombardi Award Watch List, had 11.5 sacks in 2008, one shy of the Sun Belt Conference record, and was the conference's defensive player of the year.

KEY LOSSES

David Johnson, TE

Had 22 catches for 356 yards in 2008, selected by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the seventh round of the NFL draft

Ben Owens, LB

Led the team with 87 tackles as a senior.

Matt Mandich, LT

Anchored the offensive line as a four-time All-Sun Belt selection.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Andre Smith, QB/WR

The 6-foot-2, 190-pound redshirted freshman from Killeen, Texas, is still in the running to win the back-up quarterback job, but also might play some at wide receiver in the fall.

"Corey had by far the best spring he's ever had. He played better than he has since he's been here, fall or spring, with his performances this spring."

Head Coach Steve Roberts on QB Corey Leonard

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5 Mississippi St.
Sept. 12 at Nebraska
Sept. 26 Troy
Oct. 3 at Iowa
Oct. 13 at ULM
Oct. 24 Fla. International
Oct. 31 at Louisville
Nov. 7 La.-Lafayette
Nov. 14 at Fla. Atlantic
Nov. 21 at MTSU
Nov. 28 North Texas
Dec. 3 at Western Kentucky

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30 at Texas A&M..... W, 18-14
Sept. 6 Texas Southern... W, 83-10
Sept. 13 Southern Miss..... L, 27-24
Sept. 20 Mid. Tennessee.... W, 31-14
Sept. 27 at Memphis L, 29-17
Oct. 11 La.-Monroe..... W, 37-29
Oct. 18 at La.-Lafayette..... L, 28-23
Nov. 1 at Alabama L, 35-0
Nov. 8 at Fla. Internat'l ... L, 22-21
Nov. 22 Fla. Atlantic W, 28-14
Nov. 29 at North Texas.... W, 33-28
Dec. 6 at Troy L, 35-9

10-YEAR RECORD

1999.....4-7
2000.....1-10
2001.....2-9
2002.....6-7
2003.....5-7
2004.....3-8
2005.....6-6
2006.....6-6
2007.....5-7
2008.....6-6



Virginia Tech Hokies

There's little doubt that Tyrod Taylor will be Virginia Tech's No. 1 quarterback in the fall.

That's a lot different from a year ago when coach Frank Beamer wanted to redshirt Taylor. After the Hokies lost to East Carolina in their 2008 opener, Beamer decided that he had to have Taylor in the lineup.

This year Taylor, who missed time last season because of injuries, was healthy and ready to go coming out of spring practice.

"I think Tyrod had a very good spring," Beamer said. "I think he's a leader, just the way he goes about things. I think he was a little bit more vocal this spring. He understands that this is his football team."

Taylor played in 12 games in 2009. He was the team's second-leading rusher with 738 yards while completing 57.2 percent of his passes.

Most importantly, the Hokies went 10-4, won the ACC championship and beat Cincinnati in the Orange Bowl under his direction.

The running game was a key part of that success. The Hokies averaged 174 yards rushing and 129 passing per game in 2008. Taylor and running back Darren Evans carried much of the load on the ground. That isn't likely to change this season.

Evans rushed for 1,265 yards a year ago – including a 253-yard game against Maryland – to set an Atlantic Coast Conference freshman record. He may get a little more help in the backfield this

season from Ryan Williams. The redshirted freshman rushed for 85 yards on 10 carries and took a screen pass 56 yards for a touchdown in the Virginia Tech spring game.

Williams is confident in his abilities. "When I get on the field and it's my opportunity to shine, I want to be the big 'X' factor,"



TYROD TAYLOR

STRENGTHS

Frank Beamer's teams always play good defense. The Hokies lost four defensive starters from last year, but don't expect their defense to slip too much in 2009. Special teams are always a strength

for the Hokies, too. Defensive tackle **JOHN GRAVES** blocked three field goals a year ago.

Defensive end Jason Worlds and outside linebacker Cody Grimm combined for 15.5 sacks and 32.5 tackles for losses last season.

QUESTION MARKS

The kicking game has to concern Beamer heading into the season. The Hokies lost place-kicker Dustin Keys, who was a semifinalist for the Lou Groza Award. Virginia Tech also must replace guard Nick Marshman and center Ryan Shuman on the offensive line.

The duo totaled 63 career starts between them. The Hokies return seven starters on defense but have a big hole in the defensive backfield with the loss of Victor Harris, who had 18 career interceptions, including six as a senior.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

The Hokies face a killer schedule. They jump right in the fire when they open the season Sept. 5 against Alabama in Atlanta. Then come non-conference home games against Marshall and Nebraska before the ACC opener at home against Miami. The Hokies also have conference home games against Boston College, North Carolina and North Carolina State. They go on the road to face Duke, Georgia Tech, Maryland and Virginia. Virginia Tech's final non-conference game is Nov. 5 at East Carolina. Add it all up, and the Hokies will play nine teams in 2009 that played in bowl games last season.

he said. "When it comes to crunch time, I want people to depend on me. I feel like I'm a clutch person. I feel I can always make big plays and I know what I'm capable of doing."

Williams certainly has impressed Beamer.

"Explosiveness is the word with him," Beamer said. "He runs with quickness."

Third-string quarterback Marcus Davis could provide some help at wide receiver. Joseph "Ju-Ju" Clayton was named the second-string quarterback during spring practice, but Beamer wants to get Davis on the



field as well.

"Coming out of high school, I felt like he could be a very good quarterback, and I still feel that way," Beamer

said." But (he) also showed that we need to get him on the field somewhere, and we're going to work on that part of it."

The Hokies should be strong defensively with seven returning starters. They should be able to get pressure on opposing quarterbacks with senior defensive end Jason Worilds (eight sacks) and senior linebacker Cody Grimm returning. Grimm had 71 tackles

and 7.5 sacks as a back up in 2008.

The Hokies face a tough opener when they play Alabama at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta on Sept. 5, but Beamer said they won't be thinking about the Crimson Tide for quite some time.



DARREN EVANS

"We're trying to get ourselves better," he said. "That's the key thing for us. I think any time you play a national program, a quality program like Alabama, our players are excited and I know our fans are. I've been hearing some things about ticket sales. There's no question they're very excited about opening against Alabama there in Atlanta."

"As far as the offense, I feel I am the No. 1 leader and that's how I carry it. Of course, we have Darren Evans [who did not play in the spring game because of an injury] and some linemen who are going to lead, but I try to go out there and lead by example and show the guys that they can follow me."

Quarterback Tyrod Taylor *following the spring game*

AT THE HELM

Frank Beamer, 23rd year, 177-89-2

29th season, 219-121-4 overall

Beamer has led the Hokies to 16 consecutive bowl games, three ACC titles, three Big East titles and a trip to the national championship game. Since 1995, only Ohio State and Florida have more victories than Virginia Tech.



KEY RETURNEES

Darren Evans, TB

Set an ACC record for rushing yards in a season a year ago with 1,265, to finish third in the ACC with 90.4 yards per game.

Jason Worilds, DE

Second-team All-ACC performer, who was fourth on the team in tackles (46) including team highs in tackles for losses (18.5) and sacks (eight).

Tyrod Taylor, QB

Looks like a solid No. 1 going into his junior season. Was hampered by injuries last season but was still second on the team in rushing.

KEY LOSSES

Victor Harris, CB

The first-team All-American (The Sporting News and espn.com) had six interceptions and returned two for touchdowns to go with 46 tackles.

Orion Martin, DE

Had 46 tackles last season, including 7.5 sacks, and provided great leadership for the Hokies.

Dustin Keys, PK

Finished eighth in the nation in field goals per game, making 23-of-29 attempts, and was a semifinalist for the Lou Groza Award.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Cody Grimm, OLB

The 5-foot-11, 202-pound senior from Fairfax, Va., isn't new to the Hokies, but he'll be new to the starting lineup. He had 71 tackles, 7.5 sacks, 14 tackles for losses, two interceptions and two forced fumbles coming off the bench last season.

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Alabama*
Sept. 12	Marshall
Sept. 19	Nebraska
Sept. 26	Miami
Oct. 3	at Duke
Oct. 10	Boston College
Oct. 17	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 29	North Carolina
Nov. 5	at East Carolina
Nov. 14	at Maryland
Nov. 21	NC State
Nov. 28	at Virginia

*-at Atlanta

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	East Carolina.....L, 27-22
Sept. 6	Furman.....W, 24-7
Sept. 13	Georgia Tech.....W, 20-17
Sept. 20	at N. Carolina.....W, 20-17
Sept. 27	at Nebraska.....W, 35-30
Oct. 4	W. Kentucky.....W, 27-13
Oct. 18	at Boston College.....L, 28-23
Oct. 25	at Florida St.....L, 30-20
Nov. 6	Maryland.....25-13
Nov. 13	at Miami.....16-14
Nov. 22	Duke.....14-3
Nov. 29	Virginia.....17-14
Dec. 6	Boston College.....30-12*
Jan. 1	Cincinnati.....20-7+

*-ACC Championship

+Orange Bowl

10-YEAR RECORD

1999.....	11-1
2000.....	11-1
2001.....	8-4
2002.....	10-4
2003.....	8-5
2004.....	10-3
2005.....	10-3
2006.....	10-3
2007.....	11-3
2008.....	10-4



La-Lafayette Rajin' Cajuns

Louisiana-Lafayette coach Rickey Bustle knows offense.

He's proven that in seven years as offensive coordinator at Virginia Tech followed by seven years as head coach of the Cajuns. While he was at Virginia Tech, the Hokies fielded seven of the eight highest-scoring teams in school history. The Cajuns have followed that trend.

Last year, Louisiana scored 397 points, including a 59-point outburst in a victory against North Texas. But things might be different this season because the Cajuns lost two of the most prolific offensive players in school history.

Quarterback Michael Desormeaux, the Sun Belt Conference offensive player of the year, signed a free agent contract with the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars, where he'll likely play as a defensive back. With Desormeaux directing the offense, the Cajuns led the Sun Belt Conference in total yards, rushing yards, yards per game, yards per play, third-down conversion percentage and touchdowns.

Bustle has a number of quarterback candidates from whom to pick, with sophomores Chris Masson and Brad McGuire leading the pack. "We still have quite a battle going with Brad and Chris at quarterback," Bustle told KADN TV in Lafayette at the end of spring practice. "I thought Chris played extremely well in the spring game because it was the first time, really, that we did game situations, and there were lots of great game situations that came up."

McGuire filled in for an injured Desormeaux last year against Arkansas State and led the Cajuns to a 28-23 victory.

"I'm nowhere near ready to make any decisions," Bustle told KADN. "Brad had an opportunity last year against Arkansas State, and they (the players) saw what he could do, so there's a tremendous amount of confidence behind him, and Chris was



GERREN BLUNT

STRENGTHS

The strength a year ago was at quarterback and running



back. This year it may well be in the offensive line. The Cajuns return three key players up front in seniors

CHRIS FISHER, Brad Bustle and Jonathon Decoster. Fisher is on the Rimington Trophy Watch List. The defense also could be much improved, with senior linebacker Antwyne Zanders leading the way. Coach Rickey Bustle thinks the defense will be much improved over last year when the Cajuns gave up 404 points, an average of 33.6 per game.

QUESTION MARKS

The Cajuns will enter fall camp still looking for their starting quarterback and starting running back. Sophomores Chris Masson and Brad McGuire are the leaders at quarterback, but

redshirted freshmen Blaine Gautier, Keldric White and Brady Thomas will also get a look. Replacing Sun Belt Conference all-time leading rusher Tyrell Fenroy will also be a priority for the Cajuns. Undrea Sails may be the replacement for Fenroy, but Julian Shankle, Matt Dupre, Draylon Booker, Yobes Walker and Ian Roberts will also get a chance to show what they can do.

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN

The Cajuns gave Kansas State all it wanted last season before falling 45-37 in Manhattan, Kan. This year, the Wildcats – with new/old head coach Bill Snyder at the helm – will travel to Lafayette on Sept. 12. The Cajuns won't have a break before their Sept. 26 date at Nebraska, because they'll play at LSU the week before. They will get league power Troy at home in the final game of the regular season.

kind of the guy nipping at his heels.

"But I really think this spring, and especially (in) the spring game, the guys saw him under pressure, and that created a lot of support for him. I look as it right now that it's closer than it ever has been."

The Cajuns also must replace Tyrell Fenroy, the leading rusher in school and Sun Belt Conference history. Senior Undrea Sails, a second-year junior college transfer, emerged as the leading candidate for the job, but that won't be decided for sure until the fall.



Whoever emerges as the running back will have an experienced line behind which to run. Senior center Chris Fisher, senior guard

Brad Bustle – the coach's son – and junior tackle

Jonathon Decoster all return from last season.

The Cajuns struggled on defense last season giving up 33.6 points per game, but Rickey Bustle saw a much-improved unit on the field during spring drills.

Senior linebacker Antwyne Zanders, a two-time all-conference honoree, led the Cajuns in tackles while playing both middle and outside linebacker last season.



ANTWYNE ZANDERS

"I really think this is a fast defense," Bustle told KADN. "It's the fastest defense we've had since I've been here. They're really athletic. I'm really excited about seeing them getting better. I really do expect the defense to improve enough to slow people down."

The Cajuns will put a young team on the field this fall, but a number of those young players got some experience last year.

"We had a lot of young players who got a lot of reps," Bustle said. "We still had some carryover injuries from the fall. A lot of those young players who played last year as freshman and so forth got a lot of work this spring. That's always a positive thing."

AT THE HELM

Rickey Bustle, 7th year, 32-50, all at Louisiana-Lafayette

Bustle spent seven years at Virginia Tech as quarterbacks coach and offensive coordinator. The Hokies fielded seven of the school's eight highest scoring teams during that period.



KEY RETURNEES

Gerren Blunt, DB

Scored two touchdowns last year, one on a fumble return and one on an interception.

Chris Fisher, OL

Was a key player on an offensive line that helped the Cajuns roll up school records in five different offensive categories.

Antwyne Zanders, LB

Was an All-Sun Belt Conference first-team selection for the second consecutive year and the only Cajuns' linebacker to play in every game last season.

KEY LOSSES

Michael Desormeaux, QB

The senior broke Jake Delhomme's school record for single-season passing efficiency and was Sun Belt Conference offensive player of the year.

Tyrell Fenroy, RB

Set school records for rushing yards in a career and a season as well as touchdowns in a season.

Jason Chery, WR/KR

Ranked 14th in the NCAA in all-purpose yards in 2008 and made 14 tackles on special teams.

NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

**Brad McGuire, QB
or Chris Masson QB**

One of these sophomores likely will replace school-record holder Michael Desormeaux at quarterback.

"I think we have a good senior class. In the springtime you don't see it quite as much because everyone is out there fighting and kind of learning their way a little bit. The great thing is the seniors we have now were taught very well last year."

Head Coach Rickey Bustle *following spring practice*

2009 SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Southern
Sept. 12	Kansas State
Sept. 19	at LSU
Sept. 26	at Nebraska
Oct. 10	North Texas
Oct. 17	at Western Kentucky
Oct. 24	at Fla. Atlantic
Oct. 31	at Fla. International
Nov. 7	at Arkansas State
Nov. 14	at Mid. Tennessee
Nov. 21	La.-Monroe
Nov. 28	Troy

2008 RESULTS

Aug. 30	at Southern Miss	L, 51-21
Sept. 13	at Illinois	L, 20-17
Sept. 20	Kent State	W, 44-27
Sept. 27	at Kansas State	L, 45-37
Oct. 4	at La.-Monroe	W, 44-35
Oct. 11	at North Texas	W, 59-30
Oct. 18	Arkansas St.	W, 28-23
Nov. 1	Fla. Internat'l	W, 49-20
Nov. 8	UTEP	L, 37-24
Nov. 15	at Fla. Atlantic	L, 40-29
Nov. 22	at Troy	L, 48-3
Dec. 3	Mid. Tennessee	W, 42-28

10-YEAR RECORD

1999	2-9
2000	1-10
2001	3-8
2002	3-9
2003	4-8
2004	4-7
2005	6-5
2006	6-6
2007	3-9
2008	6-6

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VIEW FROM THE BOOTH

BY GREG SHARPE

Defining success in Pelini's second year

TO TRULY APPRECIATE the 2008 Nebraska football season you have to remember how far the program advanced from the end of the 2007 campaign. In my eyes, the biggest progress was made in the attitude and effort the Husker squad brought to each game. As you think back to the final two games of the season, Nebraska needed fourth-quarter rallies to beat both Colorado and Clemson. That fighting spirit comes from the head coach and the entire coaching staff.

Now, can the team carry that same spirit and fight into this season? That, to me, is one of the intangibles to watch for in 2009. Replacing a leader like Joe Ganz falls into the lap of Zac Lee. It appears after watching spring practice that Lee is more gifted than Ganz, but does he possess the toughness and leadership qualities that Ganz brought to the table? Those are questions that will only be answered in games. Lee will need to rely on his talented running backs and hope that the offensive line jells in order for this offense to be two-dimensional. Developing play-makers at the wide receiver spots will also be a work in progress in the fall.

There are fewer question marks on defense for the Huskers. In fact, it will be a much deeper squad this fall for the Blackshirts. That depth will create some good competition and allow the coaches

more flexibility in substituting during games.

What the Huskers will have this year that has been missing for a number of seasons is an All-America candidate in Ndamukong Suh. The senior nose tackle gives the Big Red one of those players that the other team has to game-plan for on every snap. Nebraska hasn't had many of those guys lately.

As I look at the schedule for the upcoming year, it includes one fewer home game than in 2008 and not one road game that you can honestly say is a "for-sure win." How Nebraska fares in those five road games will obviously determine the fate of this team. The Huskers won't be picked to win the North Division, but the team that will be (Kansas), I don't believe will accomplish the task. The Jayhawks' schedule leaves them with a slim margin for error. I can envision a scenario in which Nebraska travels to Boulder, Colo., the day after Thanksgiving with both teams having a shot to claim the North crown. The Buffaloes were hit hard by injury last season and now have most of those players back plus the ones that filled in late in the year. To me, they are more of a concern than Missouri. The Big 12 North champion the last two years lost too many weapons on offense and a good chunk of its defense to be considered a

serious contender. Having said that, I know it will not be easy for the Huskers to win at Columbia, Mo. But I look for Missouri to struggle all season long.

As you look around college football, you do see some great success stories with programs that have made a big jump from year one to year two with a new coaching staff. Oklahoma under Bob Stoops and Alabama under Nick Saban come to mind. I anticipate seeing that type of jump on defense for the Huskers, but I'm not sure the same progression occurs on offense.

So this season will come down to good play from the quarterback, success on the road and continued development of the toughness that was built in 2008. If those things happen, then Nebraska will have a chance to win the North Division and play for a BCS bowl in the Big 12 Championship Game.

Failure to win the North should not be the barometer by which the program is measured this season, however. Remember that Husker football didn't fall to the level of the 2007 season overnight, and it won't return to the glory of the 90's in the blink of an eye, either. Winning a conference title with a first-year quarterback is difficult, and that's the hand with which Nebraska will be playing this season. **N**

PRESEASON TOP 25

1. Florida (11)
2. Texas (1)
3. Oklahoma
4. USC
5. Virginia Tech
6. Ohio State
7. Ole Miss
8. Alabama
9. Oklahoma State
10. LSU
11. Penn State
12. Boise State
13. Oregon
14. Georgia
15. California
16. Kansas
17. TCU
18. Georgia
19. Nebraska
20. Iowa
21. Utah
22. Florida State
23. Georgia Tech
24. Notre Dame
25. Oregon State

RANKINGS REFLECT TOP 10'S

SUBMITTED BY: Aaron Babcock, Huskers Illustrated; Mike Babcock, Huskers Illustrated; Olin Buchanan, Rivals.com; Sean Callahan, HuskersIllustrated.com; Dirk Chatelain, Omaha World-Herald; Brian Christopherson, Lincoln Journal Star; Tom Dienhart, Rivals.com; Terry Douglass, Grand Island Independent; Bob Hamar, Grand Island Independent; Dave Hunt, KLNK-TV (Lincoln); Kevin Kugler, ESPN 1620 The Zone (Omaha), Westwood One; Mike'l Severe, ESPN 1620 The Zone (Omaha); Jeff Wilkerson, ESPN 1480 The Spread (Lincoln).

GAMES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Week by week during the season, here are some games – other than Nebraska's, of course – that would be worth watching, and not just for their impact on the national championship race.

Sept. 3 (Thursday) Oregon at Boise State

If Boise State is worthy of BCS bowl consideration, the Broncos can show it in the opener against an Oregon team with high aspirations of its own. Bronco Stadium, with its blue turf, will be packed and rocking. Boise State upset the Ducks last season in Eugene, 37-32.

Sept. 5 Alabama vs. Virginia Tech at Atlanta

Virginia Tech certainly won't be looking ahead to Nebraska's visit to Blacksburg in two weeks. The Hokies could be national title contenders. But then, so could Alabama. The Georgia Dome provides a neutral site for determining which of the two has a better chance.

Sept. 7 (Monday) Miami at Florida State

Florida State and Miami have played in two of the highest-rated college football games ever televised by ESPN, in 1994 and 2006. They have Monday night to themselves, which also helps, though neither team is a Top 25 certainty. The Seminoles are closer than the Hurricanes.

Sept. 12 Pittsburgh at Buffalo

Pittsburgh, and former Cornhusker athletic director Steve Pederson, make a visit to Buffalo, where former Cornhusker quarterback and assistant coach Turner Gill has been nothing short of a miracle worker. This match-up has to be more interesting than, say, Iowa at Iowa State, right?

Sept. 19 Kansas State at UCLA

Neither team has much appeal beyond its own fan base. But Bill Snyder has returned to Kansas State and a coaching match-up with UCLA's Rick Neuheisel will be like old times. At Colorado, Neuheisel was 2-2 against Snyder.

Sept. 26 Iowa at Penn State

Time to check in on defending Big Ten co-champ Penn State as it opens conference play against the team that, in Iowa City, spoiled its chances of playing for the BCS national title last season. Other key games are California at Oregon and Arkansas at Alabama.

Oct. 3 USC at California

The Trojans go into Berkeley with a new quarterback, whoever emerges, and a rebuilt defense. Cal also has some uncertainty at QB and will be coming off a game at Oregon. With back-to-back victories the Bears would be in the Pac-10 driver's seat.

Oct. 10 Florida at LSU

LSU's SEC schedule is brutal. In addition to playing at divisional favorites Alabama and Mississippi, the Tigers have to deal with back-to-back inter-divisional games at Georgia and then this one against defending national champion Florida.

Oct. 17 Oklahoma vs. Texas at Dallas

Here's a no-brainer as the day's best bet, even if USC at Notre Dame hasn't lost the luster it once had. It's unlikely that the Sooners could lose again this season and still play for the national championship, although the Big 12 tie-breaker hasn't changed.

Oct. 24 Arkansas at Mississippi

Can Houston Nutt's second team at Ole Miss live up to pre-season expectations/hype? Arkansas provides the Rebels a break from teams located in

Alabama. The Razorbacks are third in a stretch that includes Alabama, UAB and at Auburn. Oh yes, Nutt came from Arkansas.

Oct. 31 Notre Dame vs. Washington State (at San Antonio)

Even though Georgia and Florida play in Jacksonville, you've got to look in on Charlie Weis, Jimmy Clausen and Notre Dame at some point, right? Plus, the Irish are playing an eighth "home" game against Washington State in the Alamodome. What's that all about? Recruiting perhaps?

Nov. 7 LSU at Alabama

This will have implications in the Western Division of the SEC, and could determine the divisional champion, particularly if the teams have survived tough conference games to this point. Alabama doesn't play Florida in the regular season, so this is the Crimson Tide's chance.

Nov. 14 Tennessee at Mississippi

That has first-year coach Lane Kiffin – and former Oakland Raiders head coach (sound familiar?) – accomplished at Tennessee besides turning Knoxville into the setting for a soap opera immediately after being hired? The Volunteers will have played at Florida and at Alabama by now.

Nov. 21 Ohio State at Michigan

Jim Tressel's Buckeyes have won the last five games in the series, giving Tressel a 7-1 record against Michigan. Lloyd Carr was 6-7 against Ohio State. Can Rich Rodriguez do better? His first opportunity resulted in a 42-7 loss, the Buckeyes' largest margin of victory since 1968.

Nov. 26 (Thursday) Texas at Texas A&M

Nebraska and Oklahoma no longer play each other on Thanksgiving weekend because of the Big 12 and now the conference is considering moving the Nebraska-Colorado game at some point in the future. But Texas-Texas A&M remains. There's always pro football, on the NFL Network.

Nov. 28 Oklahoma State at Oklahoma

Among rivalry-week games are Alabama at Auburn, Florida State at Florida and Georgia at Georgia Tech. But Oklahoma State at Oklahoma could have national championship implications for both teams. The Sooners have won the last five meetings.

Dec. 3 (Thursday) Oregon State at Oregon

The series between these in-state rivals is nicknamed the "Civil War" for good reason. Oregon's Chip Kelly will be dealing with it as head coach after being offensive coordinator for Mike Bellotti, now the Ducks' athletic director. Former Husker Scott Frost is a Kelly assistant.

Dec. 5 Arizona at USC

The Trojans could be looking ahead to the BCS national championship game in Pasadena on Jan. 7, or not. Pete Carroll has talent; no question about that. But even USC should have a difficult time replacing four linebackers drafted by the NFL, right?

Dec. 12 Army vs. Navy at Philadelphia

Never mind that this game lacks BCS implications. The service-academy rivalry dates to 1890 and has been continuous since 1930. Navy has won the last seven meetings and how leads in the series 52-49-7.

Excitement's in the air.
The team is fully prepared.
All the hours of work invested.
People will be watching, oh they'll
definitely be watching. And we are
ready to take on all the challenges
anyone may have.



2009 Nebraska Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Location	Time/Results
Sat, Sep 05	Florida Atlantic	Memorial Stadium	TBA
Sat, Sep 12	Arkansas State	Memorial Stadium	TBA
Sat, Sep 19	at Virginia Tech	at Blacksburg, VA	TBA
Sat, Sep 26	Louisiana-Lafayette	Memorial Stadium	TBA
Thu, Oct 08	at Missouri *	at Columbia, MO	8 p.m., ESPN
Sat, Oct 17	Texas Tech *	Memorial Stadium	TBA
Sat, Oct 24	Iowa State *	Memorial Stadium	TBA
Sat, Oct 31	at Baylor *	at Waco, TX	TBA
Sat, Nov 07	Oklahoma *	Memorial Stadium	TBA
Sat, Nov 14	at Kansas *	at Lawrence, KS	TBA
Sat, Nov 21	Kansas State *	Memorial Stadium	TBA
Fri, Nov 27	at Colorado *	at Boulder, CO	2:30 p.m., ABC
Sat, Dec 5	Big 12 Championship	Arlington, TX (Dallas Cowboys New Stadium)	TBA

* Conference games



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2009 BOWL SCHEDULE

BOWL	SITE	DATE	TIME (CT)	NETWORK	MATCHUP
New Mexico	Albuquerque	12/19/09	1:30 p.m.	ESPN	MWC vs. WAC
St. Petersburg	St. Petersburg	12/19/09	7:00 p.m.	ESPN	Big East vs. C-USA
New Orleans	New Orleans	12/20/09	7:00 p.m.	ESPN	Sun Belt vs. C-USA
Las Vegas	Las Vegas	12/22/09	7:00 p.m.	ESPN	MWC vs. Pac-10
Poinsettia	San Diego	12/23/09	7:00 p.m.	ESPN	MWC vs. Pac-10
Hawaii	Honolulu	12/24/09	7:00 p.m.	ESPN	C-USA vs. WAC
Motor City	Detroit	12/26/09	noon	ESPN	Big Ten vs. MAC
Meineke Car Care	Charlotte	12/26/09	3:00 p.m.	ESPN	ACC vs. Big East
Emerald	San Francisco	12/26/09	7:30 p.m.	ESPN	ACC vs. Pac-10
Music City	Nashville	12/27/09	7:15 p.m.	ESPN	ACC vs. SEC
INDEPENDENCE	SHREVEPORT, LA.	12/28/09	4:00 P.M.	ESPN	BIG 12 VS. SEC
Champs Sports	Orlando	12/29/09	7:00 p.m.	ESPN	ACC vs. Big Ten
Humanitarian	Boise	12/30/09	3:30 p.m.	ESPN	MWC vs. WAC
TEXAS	HOUSTON	12/30/09	7:00 P.M.	NFL	BIG 12 VS. NAVY
HOLIDAY	SAN DIEGO	12/30/09	7:00 P.M.	ESPN	BIG 12 VS. PAC-10
Eagle Bank	Washington, D.C.	12/30/09	3:30 p.m.	ESPN	ACC vs. U.S. Military Academy
Armed Forces	Ft. Worth, Texas	12/31/09	TBD	ESPN	MWC vs. C-USA
SUN	EL PASO, TEXAS	12/31/09	11 A.M.	CBS	PAC-10 VS. BIG EAST/BIG 12
INSIGHT	TEMPE, ARIZ.	12/31/09	4:30 P.M.	NFL	BIG TEN VS. BIG 12
Chick Fil-a	Atlanta	12/31/09	6:30 p.m.	ESPN	ACC vs. SEC
Outback	Tampa Bay	1/1/10	10 a.m.	ESPN	Big Ten vs. ACC
Capital One	Orlando	1/1/10	noon	ABC	Big Ten vs. SEC
GATOR	JACKSONVILLE, FLA.	1/1/10	NOON	CBS	ACC VS. BIG EAST/BIG 12/N. DAME
Rose	Pasadena, Calif.	1/1/10	4 p.m.	ABC	BCS (Big Ten) vs. BCS (Pac-10)
Sugar	New Orleans	1/1/10	7:30 p.m.	FOX	BCS at-large vs. BCS at-large
INTERNATIONAL	TORONTO	1/2/10	11 A.M.	ESPN2	BIG 12 VS. MAC
COTTON	DALLAS	1/2/10	1 P.M.	FOX	BIG 12 VS. SEC
Papajohns.com	Birmingham, Ala.	1/2/10	1 p.m.	ESPN	Big East vs. SEC
Liberty	Memphis	1/2/10	4:30 p.m.	ESPN	C-USA vs. SEC
ALAMO	SAN ANTONIO	1/2/10	8 P.M.	ESPN	BIG TEN VS. BIG 12
FIESTA	GLENDALE, ARIZ.	1/4/10	TBD	FOX	BCS (BIG 12) VS. BCS (AT-LARGE)
Orange	Miami	1/5/10	7 p.m.	FOX	BCS (ACC) vs. BCS (at-large)
GMAC	Mobile, Ala.	1/6/10	6 p.m.	ESPN	ACC vs. MAC
BCS National Title	Pasadena, Calif.	1/7/10	7 p.m.	FOX	BCS #1 vs. BCS #2

BIG 12 BOWL GAMES IN BOLD

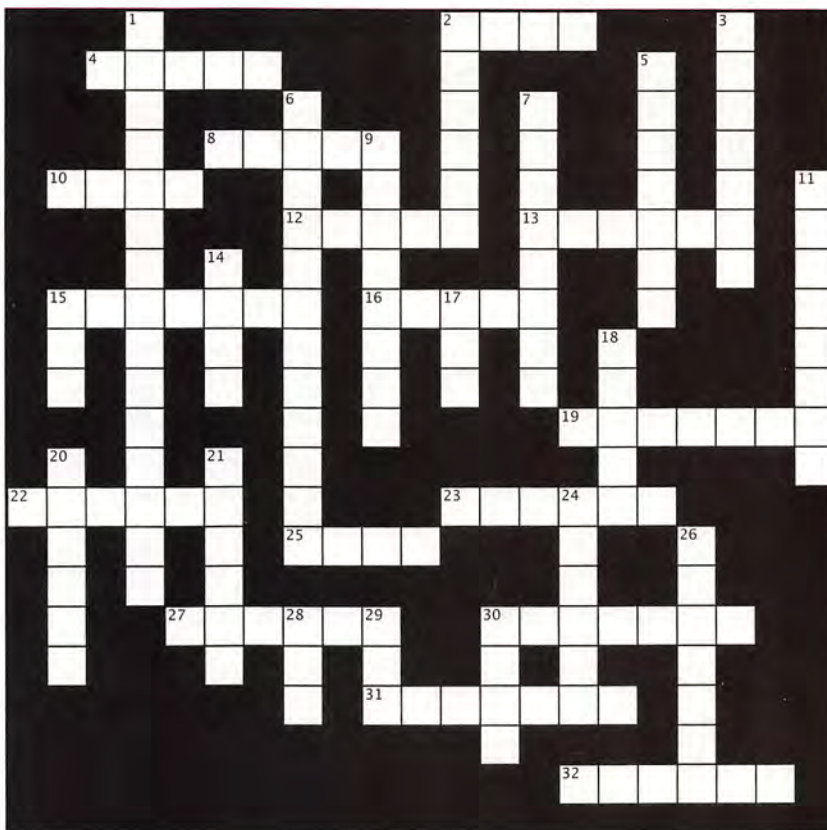
CROSSWORD & TRIVIA

ACROSS

2. Bo's older brother
4. First Husker selected in 2009 NFL Draft
8. Leading receiver in 2008
10. Frank Solich's current school
12. True freshman quarterback
13. 1997 Outland Trophy winner
15. Second Husker selected in 2009 NFL Draft
16. Wears No. 95
19. Ex-Husker in 2009 College Hall of Fame class
22. Third Husker selected in 2009 NFL Draft
23. Wears No. 1
25. Leading rusher in 2008
27. Oct. 31 opponent
30. Turner Gill's current school
31. Wears No. 52
32. Leading scorer in 2008

DOWN

1. Opponent in 2009 opener
2. Associate head coach
3. 1994 Outland Trophy winner
5. 1992 Outland Trophy winner
6. 2009 non-conference road opponent
7. Tom Osborne's alma mater
9. Wears No. 3 (defense)
11. Nov. 7 opponent
14. Network for NU-Missouri telecast
15. Leading tackler in 2008
17. Bo Pelini's former school
18. Wears No. 94
20. Wears No. 99
21. Nov. 14 opponent
24. Leading rusher in Spring Game
26. Recruiting coordinator
28. Wears No. 3 (offense)
29. Winning team in 2009 Spring Game
30. Head coach before Bo



Answers will appear in the August issue

HUSKERNUTZ



IN EARLY SUMMER, THE START OF HUSKER FOOTBALL SEASON SEEMS A LONG WAY OFF.

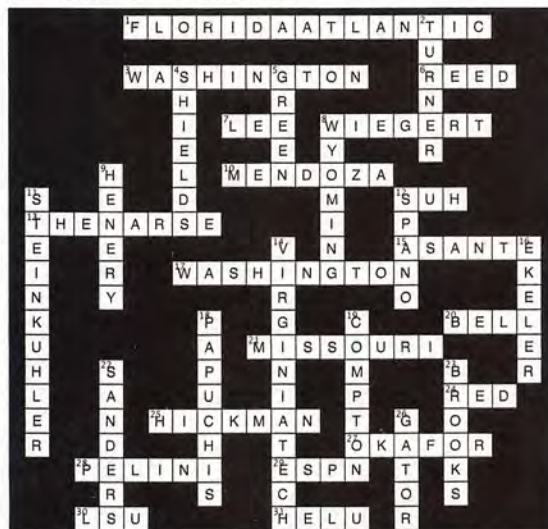
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THE FINAL WORD

BY MIKE BABCOCK

Tradition continues, 47 years later

THE DATE WAS NOV. 3, 1962.

If you had been driving from Omaha for the game that day, maybe listening to the Four Seasons or the Beach Boys on your new Ford Galaxie's radio, you could have taken Interstate-80. A 50-mile section of the 75-mile-an-hour, four-lane highway had opened for traffic in August of 1961.

If you were coming to Lincoln from the west, however, I-80 was just lines on a map in "Status of Nebraska's Interstate Highway," a publication of the Nebraska Department of Roads.

Bob Devaney's first Nebraska team, winner of its first six games, was playing Missouri. It was Homecoming. And Memorial Stadium was sold-out, knothole sections and all.

Current Cornhusker offensive line coach Barney Cotton was 6-years-old. Tight end coach Ron Brown was 5. And offensive coordinator Shawn Watson had celebrated his third birthday less than two months before. The rest of coach Bo Pelini's staff hadn't been born. Bo would be born five years later.

Tom Osborne was a 25-year-old, unpaid graduate assistant who was trying to decide whether he wanted to coach or become a classroom teacher. He had just finished a second season in the NFL – third if you count a year on the San Francisco 49ers' taxi squad – catching passes for the Washington Redskins and had asked Devaney for an opportunity. He worked with the freshman team.

The rules required players to go both ways, offense and defense. The beginning of Nebraska's Blackshirt tradition was still

nearly two years away.

The Cornhuskers had made only two post-season bowl appearances in school history, both resulting in losses. The most recent was eight seasons before, by default. The Big Seven had a no-repeat rule, so Nebraska instead of conference champ Oklahoma had gone to the Orange Bowl.

That season had been the Cornhuskers' last with a winning record, and one of only three since they had gone to the Rose Bowl following the 1940 season.

Nebraska had been through eight coaches in those 21 seasons before Devaney.

The Cornhuskers lost to Missouri 16-7. But that's incidental here. The official attendance that afternoon was 36,501, the second-largest crowd of the season behind the 36,867 on hand for a 19-14 non-conference victory against North Carolina State three weeks earlier.

Nebraska's NCAA record for consecutive sellouts had begun.

The streak has continued through expansions that now allow for crowds upwards of 86,000. It will reach 300 when the Cornhuskers play their final non-conference game against Louisiana-Lafayette on Sept. 26 and continue to roll right along, extending into the foreseeable future.

The sellout streak is the last remaining element of modern Cornhusker tradition and as such, underscores the task Pelini faces in restoring that tradition. The tradition's other streaks, among them nine-win seasons, bowl appearances and even winning seasons, all have ended.

Memorial Stadium's sellout streak was in jeopardy before Osborne returned as athletic director, and brought in Pelini. This from the Oct. 20, 2007 issue of *Huskers Illustrated*, following a 45-14 loss to Oklahoma State: "Fans were streaming from the stands long before the end."

At that point, there seemed to be a disconnect between the program and the core of Cornhusker fans. First they leave at halftime. Then they don't bother to come at all.

Losing was a significant reason. But the disconnect was a result of more than losing. It was the manner in which the Cornhuskers lost, the lack of passion, reaching a point of resignation.

Had that disconnect continued, the sellout streak would have been in jeopardy. At some point, tickets would have gone unsold. Revenue would have dropped. And, well, you can finish the sentence. Osborne certainly could. He understood the urgency of the situation.

Cornhusker fans have rallied, first around him and then around Pelini, who produced under the pressure created by his predecessor's 5-7 final season. Going 9-4, earning a share of the Big 12 North Division title and not only getting to the Gator Bowl but winning it will be difficult to top.

Clearly, the program is going in the right direction. The process of restoring tradition is underway. But that process will require time, and maybe a little patience.

Look back to Nov. 3, 1962, the day a unique element of that tradition began. **N**

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